

College

Composition and Communication

THE OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE CONFERENCE ON
COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION

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Coordination (Faulty) and Subordination (Upside-Down)¹

JAMES SLEDD²

(This paper attributes certain opinions to "the linguist," a fictitious individual whose authority I find it convenient to cite for opinions of my own, and certain others to "the traditionalist," a hollow man who is never allowed to talk back. For these innocent inventions, perhaps no actual linguist living or dead would care to be responsible.)

The first and most important way in which linguistics can serve us as teachers of composition is that it can help us see what we have to do and how we can best do it. The teacher who knows some linguistics sees the composition course in the light of his knowledge; and if he does not foolishly conclude that linguistics is a panacea, his introduction to linguistic science may be part of a general reorientation which is more valuable than any one specific use of linguistic methods or materials. Linguistics can teach us something about the relations between speech and writing—for example, that speech comes first in time and in importance, that writing is an incomplete but partially independent secondary representation of speech, that the kinds of speech which we normally write are very different from plain talk, and that mastering these differences is a large part of our students' job. Linguistics can teach us something about the nature of style as choice; and when we are dealing with style in language, it can give us the necessary terms and distinctions to describe the choices that are open. Linguistics can teach us that grammatical structure is stylistically no

less important than vocabulary and that structure must be described systematically, as a system and as a formal system, whose categories cannot be adequately defined in terms of meaning. And linguistics has already taught us that when we have specified the choices which the student can make in speech and writing, we should not ruin our work by upholding some silly standard of mechanical correctness. A good linguist is no *enemy* of standards, but he does believe that we should know what is before we try to say what ought to be. He can therefore help us, I think, to set higher ideals than we have often been contented with—and to reach them, too.

If this faith that is in me is more than the faith of an apprentice witch-doctor in a new and blacker magic, I must welcome the demand that the linguist and his converts put up or shut up. I do welcome it, and happily accept my share in the burden of proof that the principles of linguistics are directly relevant to problems of writing. Such proof, in one small area, is what I am here to offer.

A grammatical system, the linguist says, is a formal structure whose categories must be formally defined. His reason is not only that it is difficult to deal precisely and objectively with meaning. Grammatical and logical categories, he argues, do not always coincide; even if they did, the logical or semantic categories which would have to be recognized in the description of a particular language would still be determined by the number and nature of the formal distinctions in that language; and if grammar is to be a means of interpretation, the grammarian must start

¹This paper was one of three read in Panel I. Applying Structural Linguistics to Specific Teaching Problems, 22 March 1956, CCCC Spring Meeting, New York-Statler Hotel.

²University of Chicago

with the forms in order to avoid circularity. It is only by way of the forms that we can get at the meanings.

These propositions, if they are true, have the most immediate and far-reaching consequences for the teaching of composition. Both our descriptions and our prescriptions will have to be revised. With at least some of the necessary changes in description all of us are familiar. The conservative himself is now a little uneasy when he tells a class that a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing, that the subject of a sentence is what the sentence is about, or that a sentence itself is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. The junior witch-doctor, like me, is more than just uneasy. He begins his definition of the English noun by describing its inflections; he goes on to note the main positions which nouns occupy in phrases and sentences; he says something about the derivational patterns in which nouns occur; and he strictly subordinates his semantic descriptions to these matters of form. Happily or unhappily, witch-hunters and witch-doctors both recognize that in description a revolution has begun.

Perhaps we have not yet recognized so clearly that the changes in grammatical description which have been forced upon us will force us also to change our statements of what is good and what is bad in our students' speech and writing. Ultimately, we cannot escape that recognition. If we accept the linguist's doctrines, we will find that our whole treatment of diction must be modified, and modified at every level of our teaching, from the freshman classroom to the graduate seminar. A good example is our classification of clauses and our instructions for the use of coordination and subordination.

Our usual teaching about clauses rests, I think, on the false assumption that grammatical and semantic categor-

ies do coincide. Having made that assumption, we quite logically tell our students to put their main ideas into main clauses and their subordinate ideas into subordinate clauses. Principal clauses, we tell them, express principal ideas, so that compound sentences, consisting of two or more such clauses, give equal emphasis to equal thoughts but weaken unity or coherence. Between the clauses of a compound sentence, which we say are related just as separate sentences are related, there is then no logical advance; two ideas, or two expressions of the same idea (if two are possible), are merely juxtaposed. With complex sentences, we say, the case is altered. Since subordinate clauses express subordinate ideas, complex sentences rank and relate our thoughts in the order of their importance. The primary thought receives primary emphasis, and complex sentences are therefore more unified and more coherent than compound sentences.

I have been careful not to misrepresent the traditional theory of clauses, which I have found in learned histories of prose style as well as a variety of handbooks; and I think I am equally fair in saying that to a linguist, this theory seems to rest on a series of bad puns, the old confusion of grammatical and logical terms. Subordinate clauses, the linguist tells us, are grammatically subordinate; that is, they are used like single nouns, adjectives, or adverbs, often to expand smaller constructions. Just as we can say, for example, "The man is my uncle," so we can expand the nominal construction *the man* with a subordinate clause and say, "The man *whom you met* is my uncle." In this grammatical sense, *whom you met* is subordinate, precisely as we might say that *big* is subordinate in the sentence, "The big man is my nephew," or that *there* is subordinate in "The boy there is my nephew." Similarly, according to the linguist, independent or principal clauses are gram-

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matically independent; they are subject-predicate combinations which do not expand smaller constructions and whose only grammatical equivalents are similar combinations. It does *not* follow that the same state of affairs *must* always be symbolized or *should* always be symbolized by the same clause-pattern. Principal clauses can and sometimes should express subordinate ideas, which need not be expressed by grammatical subordination; and the clauses of a compound sentence may be as unified and coherent and as precisely related as the clauses of a complex sentence. The traditional theory of clauses is simply untenable. When we teach it, we are teaching a rhetoric that is bad because we have confused our grammar with our logic.

The most obviously false statement in the traditional theory is the least generally accepted, that compound sentences, by comparison with complex sentences, lack unity, coherence, and precise articulation. I will not laboriously disprove this statement, either by analyzing the meanings of words like *and* or *but* or by citing the logician's rules for the transformation of propositions from one form to another; our everyday experience is ample refutation of an obvious absurdity.

Other propositions in the traditional theory turn out to be less clear, but more dangerous, because more plausible and more widely believed. One version might be summed up in the ambiguous platitude that form and meaning are inseparable. Thus when he lays down his rules about clauses, the traditionalist may mean that in their use we have no stylistic choice, because it is impossible to say the same thing in two different clause-patterns; "the writer's meaning is his language, and his language is his meaning."³ We should therefore tell our

students, when their use of subordination or coordination displeases us, only that they should re-think their material and say what they really mean.

If this is what the traditionalist intends, his theory is easily reduced to absurdity, for it denies the possibility of translation, paraphrase, summary, accurate indirect quotation, and deductive logic. Indeed, if there were no synonymous expressions, language and communication themselves would be impossible, since meanings would be inseparably bound to particular sequences of phones or graphs. If we asked a man what he meant, he could only repeat what he had said before, and if we did not understand him, he could give no further explanation.

The second step in the refutation of this wild notion is again the appeal to the logician's transformation-rules, which guarantee the possibility of expressing the same content in clauses of different form. So if we say, "Either it's not raining, or the streets are wet," we have uttered a compound sentence; but that compound sentence may be exactly translated by the complex sentence, "If it's raining, the streets are wet." Such transformations are the stock in trade of the logician, who puts his propositions into the form that best suits his purpose; and we do precisely the same thing unless we have lost our senses by reading the New Critics. Consider the following pairs of sentences:

1. Though he was tired, he still worked hard.
He was tired, but he still worked hard.
2. Language would be impossible, since meanings would be inseparably bound to particular phones.
Language would be impossible, for meanings would be inseparably bound to particular phones.

³This quotation is genuine, but no good purpose would be served by identifying its authors, who must have written it in their sleep.

3. I won't write you, since I wouldn't have anything to say.

²I won't ³write you² | ²I wouldn't have anything to ³say¹#

The members of each pair, though one sentence is complex and the other compound, are the same in meaning.

To my examples it may be objected that although two sentences may say the same thing, they say it with different emphases—that main clauses are by nature more emphatic than subordinate clauses. Such an objection would embody the traditional theory in its most limited but clearest, most persuasive, and most generally accepted form. For all that, I answer that the objection is preposterous; and the form of my answer proves that the answer is correct. The sentence "I answer that the objection is preposterous" does not emphasize the mere fact that I am meeting an objection, though that fact is stated in the main clause. Rather the emphasis is on the subordinate clause, "that the objection is preposterous," and as far as I can tell the sentence would not be improved by reversing this arrangement.

Better examples than my own are of course a dime a dozen. Turning the pages of Kruisinga's big grammar,⁴ I quickly find numbers of good sentences in which a nominal clause is more emphatic than the main clause that it depends on:

It was generally discovered that the maker of these splendid books was himself a splendid old man.

The fact was that Yeobright's fame had spread to an awkward extent before he left home.

A good deal of its importance consists in this, that it is minute and detailed.

As for adjectival clauses, Kruisinga actually sets up a special class among

them, defined as giving additional information "which is not subordinate to the rest of the sentence but of equal weight." From his discussion, one can gather many convincing specimens:

She was much attracted by the novels of Kingsley, between whose genius and his faults she drew a drastic contrast.

Eustacia was indoors in the dining-room, which was really more like a kitchen, having a stone floor and a gaping chimney-corner.

It is a point that we must exert our imaginations a little to understand.

To complete the roll call of clause-types, I will here just mention certain kinds of sentence where the main idea almost has to go in an adverbial clause in order to avoid absurdity:

As the years passed, I grew wiser. When Lincoln was assassinated, my father was a young man.

Before the war began, Joe went to America.

In most contexts it would be plain silly to write, "As I grew wiser, the year passed"; yet the passage of time is certainly more important than any individual's increase in wisdom. The traditionalist will have to say, when he is faced with these sentences, that coordination and subordination need not reflect the intrinsic importance of ideas, but only their importance to the writer.

The evasion will not save him from the ultimate necessity of junking his theory, deliberately writing bad sentences, or deliberately wrecking good ones: the most telling of all the instances in which the traditional theory fails to account for the facts are those where it would require damaging revision. Consistency would require the traditionalist, for example, to revise the following neat sentence from Kruisinga's collection:

The noise echoed terribly through the building, and then there was a silence that was even more terrible.

⁴E. Kruisinga, *A Handbook of Present-Day English*, Part II, Vol. 3 (5th ed., Groningen, 1932), pp. 367, 373, 375, 376, 379, 381, etc.

To my mind, that sentence emphasizes the fact that the silence was more terrible than the noise, and I assume that the professional who wrote it knew and wrote what he intended; but the traditionalist must spoil the sentence because he cannot leave the main idea in a subordinate clause. He will have to write something awful, like this:

The noise echoed terribly through the building, and then the silence was even more terrible.

In the same way, he will have to ruin my next example, where again an empty main clause actually contributes to emphasis:

It is not everybody that cares for early Staffordshire pottery.

The edge would be quite taken off of that admirable generalization if it were revised:

Not everybody cares for early Staffordshire pottery.

And so it goes, in sentence after sentence. The traditionalist, however, is determined to uphold standards even though he has none worth upholding. It is thus that he promotes vice in the name of virtue.

I suggest, then, in summarizing the critical part of this paper, that the linguist's general insistence on the formal nature of grammatical categories will force us to delete specific sections from our handbooks—namely all instructions to put main ideas in main clauses and subordinate ideas in subordinate clauses. "Determine the most important idea of the sentence," the typical handbook says, "and express it in the main clause. Put lesser ideas in subordinate clauses, phrases, or words."⁵ I think I have shown that that rule will do more harm than good; and if I am right, the demonstration has positive value and cannot be dismissed as merely negative. I am still not content with the mere deletion of a

bad rule. We will have to put something in its place if we are to teach the student anything about the use of principal and subordinate clauses; and I should like to offer some modest suggestions, centering on the analysis of a few sentences such as we typically use for horrible examples.

If grammatical and logical terms cannot be equated and if we can say the same thing in different clause-patterns, then the student must regularly face stylistic choices which cannot be made mechanically. He must learn that writing is purposeful, that good writing is writing that serves its purpose well, and that the real abnegation of standards is the assumption that a single kind of writing is the only correct kind for all purposes. He may then grasp the possibility of reasoned choice by various criteria, one of which, in the matter of clauses, is proper emphasis. An idea may be emphasized by making a separate sentence of the clause which expresses it, by giving that clause a certain position within a larger sentence, by balancing or contrasting its structure with that of other clauses, or in some cases (as my examples have shown) by subordinating the important clause. Sometimes different clause-patterns will be equally emphatic, and the choice of *for* or *since*, *though* or *but*, *who* or *and* he will have to be made by some other standard—variety, rhythm, ease in transition, or the like.

Since stylistic choices are so complicated, and since we cannot trust the traditional rules to decide them, we will have to replace the old rules of thumb with a more detailed analysis, both formal and semantic, of the patterns of clause-connection and sentence-connection in English; and we must try to invent exercises which will turn the student's theoretical knowledge into active control of the resources of his language. For example, *but* and *though* may be

⁵This quotation is also genuine, but too familiar to need identification.

synonymous; often they both indicate that the simultaneous truth of the two propositions which they connect is for some reason not to be expected or out of the ordinary. The differences between *but* and *though* are largely formal: *though*-clauses are grammatically subordinate and rather freely moveable, while *but*-clauses are grammatically independent and must follow a *preceding* independent clause. These facts could easily be impressed on the student's mind by asking him to observe the effects of replacing *but* by *though* in a collection of sentences or throughout a single long passage.

I would add, however, that a great deal of our trouble with subordination and coordination is not grammatical at all, but logical or rhetorical; and here I come to my analysis of horrible examples. In the following sentence, all of us would object to the faulty coordination:

The barometer's falling, and those clouds have wind in them, and we'd better put into harbor at once.

Certainly the sentence is bad, but not because it contains three independent clauses; we would not object to sentences like the following:

He laughed, and he laughed, and he laughed.

Fox singled, and Minoso doubled, and the game was won.

In that one morning it rained, and it hailed, and it snowed.

Since the difference between the accepted and rejected sentences is not in their clause-patterns, which are identical, we must look for it elsewhere; and it is easy so see that by the label "faulty coordination" we actually mean, in this instance, a failure in logic. In the sentence about the barometer, the suggested relation of premise and conclusion, situation and consequence, is not made clear; and any rewriting will be acceptable if it introduces the needed clarity. A first rewriting

changes the one sentence into two and makes their relation clear by inference from their relative positions:

The barometer's falling, and those clouds have wind in them. We'd better put into harbor at once.

Two other rewritings make the relation explicit, but in notably different patterns of coordination and subordination:

We'd better put into harbor at once; for the barometer's falling, and those clouds have wind in them.

Since the barometer's falling and those clouds have wind in them, we'd better put into harbor at once.

Unless the original sentence were placed in a determining context, there would be little to choose, for all their differences in clause-patterns, among the three corrections.

Of my next example, the usual criticism would be "upside-down subordination":

He had almost reached Gainesville when he saw the tornado that struck the town and killed two hundred people.

One man's arrival in town, most of us would say, is not so important as the death of two hundred people—which is no doubt true, but irrelevant to the judgment of the sentence. The sentence is bad because its first two clauses state that two things happened about the same time, while the third clause has nothing to do with this temporal relation; and the fault will remain if the unimportant first clause is subordinated and the important third clause is made independent and coordinate with the second:

When he had almost reached Gainesville, he saw the tornado, and it struck the town and killed two hundred people.

As a matter of fact, it is almost indifferent which of the first two clauses is introduced by *when*, but in either case the

third clause must be made a separate sentence:

When he had almost reached Gainesville, he saw the tornado. It struck the town and killed two hundred people.

He had almost reached Gainesville when he saw the tornado. It struck the town and killed two hundred people.

The really applicable rule would not be to avoid upside-down subordination, but to talk about one thing at a time.

I would conclude, from my two horrible examples, that when we have given a student a theoretical and practical knowledge of English clause-patterns, the best general advice that we can next give him is to use both coordination and subordination in such a way that the natural or logical relations in his mater-

ial will be clear. When he puts one sentence after another, when he puts two clauses together in a single sentence, or when he chooses a conjunction or a pair of intonation-patterns to connect his clauses, he is building, at the same time, a pattern of meanings. Neither we nor the linguist can decide for the student what he wants that pattern to be; but we *can* show him any formal indications of contradiction or confusion in his finished product. We can insist that he talk sense; and though when we do so we have quite properly left the realm of grammar for those of logic and rhetoric, our insistence will be more effective if our grammar has been sensible—that is, if we have abandoned, among other delusions, the identification of main and subordinate ideas with main and subordinate clauses.

Information and Techniques from Other Disciplines¹

Introductory Remarks

ERWIN R. STEINBERG²

Teachers of English, and particularly teachers of writing, have long felt that to use language properly people should know the "rules" of how it works. For many years, therefore, grammar was an important part of all writing courses.

During the last generation, however, we have seen an important change. For various reasons, reasons we have heard often at these meetings every year, many teachers have discarded the teaching of formal English grammar in favor of new

devices. Our purpose here this evening is to explore some of the areas of relatively new knowledge and isolate from them specific information and techniques useful in the teaching of composition and communication.

We are concerned tonight, too, with avoiding one of the pitfalls into which many of the teachers of grammar fell—and perhaps still fall. Too often, teachers were so concerned with their students' learning grammar so that the students could write properly that they allowed the grammar to push the writing out of the course. The result often was that their students could rattle off the rules and even define a grammatical term or two; but they hadn't had any experi-

¹These remarks and the three following papers were presented in Panel II, 22 March 1956, CCCC Spring Meeting, New York Statler Hotel.

²Chairman of the panel, Carnegie Institute of Technology.

ence in writing. The means thus became the end; and, paradoxically, in an attempt to train better writers, writing disappeared from the program.

More recent generations of teachers have been guilty of much the same sort of thing in using information and techniques from newer disciplines. Convinced, for example, that a knowledge of semantics useful or even necessary for writing, many teachers turn a composition course into a course in semantics; and once again the means, the tool, becomes an end in itself.

The people on this panel, therefore, are going to discuss how to use specific concepts and techniques from other disciplines to teach writing without turning the writing course into something

else. Dr. Carroll will show you how one or two of the new concepts from linguistics and the psychology of language can be used in the teaching of writing without giving the students a graduate seminar in those fields or even involving them in their jargon. Dr. Fowler will discuss how to use specific concepts from semantics in the teaching of writing without turning English I into Korzybski I. And Dr. Schutte will show how the methods used by scientists can be made available to a person approaching a writing problem without getting him involved in the history of scientific method.

When the three speakers have finished, we hope that you will have questions for them.

Psycholinguistics and the Teaching of English Composition

JOHN B. CARROLL¹

As I look over what has been thought, said, or tried out in the teaching of English composition, I find a territory already extremely well traversed. The original inhabitants of this territory, of course, have lived there for a long time and have contributed their full share of highways, roads, paths, and trails. And some of the original inhabitants have been outside,—even into the strange, newly discovered land of Linguistica—and have brought back what have seemed to be new ways of traveling. I think it is a little impertinent for a person like myself,—from the even newer and stranger land of Psycholinguistica—to think that we have any really new ways which could be exportable, partly because our land borders closely upon Linguistica itself and has borrowed many of its ideas from linguistics, but also because—and here I become more serious—the chief task of psycholinguistics at the moment is to describe and explain what

goes on in verbal behavior, let alone trying to tell anyone how to teach better verbal behavior.

In approaching my subject, I tried to find some way of breaking down the teaching of English composition into component parts so that they could be dealt with singly. One of my colleagues in psychology thinks that seven is a psychological magic number,—for example, it's about the average number of random digits a person can remember in immediate memory span; hence, I have arbitrarily decreed for myself seven interrelated problems in writing. They are:

1. Having something to say.
2. Gauging the audience.
3. Organizing one's thoughts.
4. Choosing the right words.
5. Constructing sentences and paragraphs.
6. Saying exactly what you mean.
7. Saying it with style.

I'd like to run through this list with a series of brief comments from the point

¹Harvard University

of view of the psychology of language, provided that you understand that what I can say about them is not necessarily in proportion to what they may deserve.

1. *Having something to say.* To use ordinary language, we can say that writing or speaking (for that matter) is translating some kind of "thoughts" into words. The psychology of language is ordinarily concerned with how these "thoughts" get translated into words, but the college composition instructor may feel that his first problem is to arouse thoughts in his students. Occasionally we hear of a teacher who arrogantly says that he is not interested in teaching writing to people who have nothing to say, but I believe most of us prefer to assume, at least until we are proved wrong, that every one of our students has something to say, whether spontaneously,—from within, so to speak—or *in response* to something,—from without, so to speak. The problem, then, is to motivate thinking, and hence, writing.

Let me bring several things to your attention in this respect:

First, let us note that one of the motivating factors in verbal behavior is reinforcement, or reward. A person who is rewarded, somehow, for saying something is more likely to say it again, or to say more. I invite you to try this experiment, modeled after some recently published research. The next time you find yourself engaged in a conversation with a friend, take particular care to show agreement with any opinions he expresses, either by nodding assent, or better still, by rephrasing what he has said. In general, you can expect to find that the person you are talking to will be more likely to continue talking about his subject than if you show indifference, or even disagree. Is there any way of paralleling this finding in writing? The difficulty is that the reward for writing must inevitably be delayed, perhaps from Friday when the theme is passed

in until the next Friday when it is returned to the student. Any means you can find for decreasing the time between actual writing and the reward that comes for it will contribute toward better motivation for writing.

But this has to do with eliciting the writing of whatever the person has to say. People must sometimes be helped to find what they have to say. Some psychologists studying creativity and originality think that highly creative people are distinguished by the fact that they are constantly "shuffling attributes," so to speak; that is to say, in considering any problem, idea, object, or event, the creative person thinks of it in more dimensions or from more points of view than the ordinary person. Propose some topic, like "A Holiday," and where your ordinary person will treat it very literally in terms of his own experiences, your creative person will think of this topic in terms of such aspects or dimensions as the uses of holidays, the history of holidays, the symbolic significance of special holidays, and so forth. The skill with which great writers invest rather ordinary topics or events with a great richness of detail, usually by considering these ordinary topics things from out-of-the-ordinary points of view, is often remarkable. The question, now, is whether this kind of creativity can be taught or otherwise encouraged, without, of course, doing so in an artificial and forced manner. I think it can; at least I would urge experimentation in this direction. For theme topics, propose not only the central ideas but some series of unusual points of view from which these can be considered.

2. *Gauging the audience.* Studies of the conditions for communication suggest that communication implies an audience, and that lacking an audience verbal behavior is stilted and unnatural. In the context of the freshman composition course, this means that writing must be

for someone, and that "someone" must not necessarily be the instructor. In fact, it is useful and enlivening to try to write for different audiences and different occasions. An interesting class project might be the study and imitation of the style of the tabloids in contrast to that of the *New York Times*.

3. *Organizing one's thoughts.* This is a large topic, but here is at least one thought: Good writing shows a peculiar kind of interconnectedness which carries the reader along and allows him to fall into no traps unawares. As you very well know, this is accomplished by establishing in almost every sentence some expectancy of what sort of thing may come next,—perhaps an illustration, perhaps a contrasting idea, perhaps an explication of a novel idea just introduced. There is even the trick of establishing an expectancy that *nothing* will come next. To teach students to appreciate these devices and perhaps to use them more effectively, I suggest applying to paragraph organization what has been sometimes called Shannon's guessing game. In the usual application, one has people guess each successive letter of a text. Here I propose having students guess each successive *sentence* of a text,—not the exact words, of course, but at least the idea, or the kind of function played by the sentence in carrying along the development of the thought. This game can be played with texts from either standard or, shall we say, non-standard authors, the students. And I'll wager that most standard authors write more guessably.

4. *Choosing the right words.* There are many problems here, including that of good usage. Time allows me only to make a suggestion similar to what I made above,—another guessing game, but of a somewhat different sort. The background of my suggestion is as follows: a journalistically-minded psychologist has worked out what he calls the

"cloze" procedure for measuring the readability of a text, i.e., the ease with which it can be comprehended. You take the text which you are going to work with and subject it to a little delicate butchering,—cut out, say, every tenth word and leave a blank in its place. You then measure readability as a function of how readily people can guess the words you have extracted. Incidentally, this procedure seems to give more sensible results than some of the word-counting formulas like Flesch's, since this procedure shows Gertrude Stein to be a difficult writer while Flesch's formula makes her out to be easy. Now my suggestion is that this procedure be adapted to showing students how context should help to determine the "right word"; and on the way it may also show them something about writing understandably. This should be an illuminating exercise for the classroom; take a text by a standard author, strike out selected words, and see how readily students can guess those words. Then discuss the contextual clues which prompt their guesses. And finally, subject student products to this kind of analysis.

5. *Writing grammatical sentences.* This is the problem for which linguistic science has seemed to provide a long-sought solution, and I know that many of you have already tried, with considerable success, to apply structural grammar in your teaching. I have been impressed with several articles in *College English* by McCurdy Burnet, who shows how the linguistic structure of a paragraph can be diagrammed on the blackboard, and how students can be taught to identify the parts of speech rapidly and with retention,—if they are led to employ Frie's form-classes rather than the traditional quasi-philosophical definitions of parts of speech. I have been doing quite a bit of experimentation and testing with an approach to grammar which has many similarities to the re-

cent attempts of which I have just spoken. The difference, if any, is in my emphasis on the learning of grammar as a special case of concept learning.

Start with the earliest learning of one's native language. It must be obvious that the child is constantly learning the form-class allegiances of every new word he acquires. If he were to learn a word *niss*, say, meaning a kind of clay used in his play, he would very soon begin using this as what we technically term a mass noun, and he would automatically say, "Give me some niss . . . I like to play with niss," never: "Give me a niss . . . I like to play with the niss." But the pre-school period is not the time to try to make the child verbalize about such things, become conscious of form-classes and begin to label them. At what age do children start to be able to do this? Studies conducted under my direction at Harvard indicate that under the right conditions they can do it at an elementary level even by the third grade, and possibly earlier. We find this out by means of a rather conventional type of concept formation experiment: suppose we are interested in whether children can form the concept *verb*. We give a sentence like *The boy hit the ball* and ask the child to guess the word we are thinking of. After a few tries he guesses the word *hit*. "Fine," we say, and present another sentence: *I touched the sharp knife*. Again there is perhaps some fumbling, but we wait for the response *touched* and reward it. This goes on for quite a few more sentences; even third-grade children can pick out the verb in simple sentences like *Jim and Mary helped their mother*, or *Soft winds gently blow the little boat*. Notice, however, that we never mention the word *verb*. Nor do we even try to make the child verbalize how he arrives at the verb. This can come later. Next we give sentences like *A cudof biced the sitev*. The child will almost invariably pick *biced*

as the verb. Even when we give a sentence like *Docib hegof gufed ripan tesor* many children will pick *gufed* because of its verbal ending. This is a nice demonstration of the linguist's point that the parts of speech are structural rather than semantic entities.

I have used the same approach in a group testing situation, both at the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade level and at the adult level. For the elementary school children I have developed a test which teaches four grammatical ideas: subjects, objects, verbs, and adjectives. Here is the sample teaching material for *objects*:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Ned cut the
APPLE. | 1. Peter fixed my
DOLL. |
| 2. I didn't mean to
hurt YOU. | The cat killed the
mouse. |
| 3. Do you like to
eat PIE? | |
| 4. The policeman
shot the THIEF. | 2. The dentist pull-
ed my TOOTH
today. |
| 5. I broke the
WINDOW last
night. | Fred wrote a
long letter. |

The explanation is in terms of the model sentences at the left; the practice exercises are at the right, and the children are asked to mark the word in the second sentence in each pair which "does the same job" as the word in CAPITALS in the first sentence. The test items are similar. I have found that third-grade children are able to identify subjects, objects, verbs, or adjectives if you give them one task at a time. They get confused, however, when these tasks come in scrambled order; the ability to identify these items when given in any order does not mature, apparently, until the sixth grade. But it is striking that at the sixth-grade level practically all children can do these simple tasks without trouble; in the samples I have studied, they can do them with about 90% accuracy, on the average.

What about the college-age level? We would expect these people to do more complicated tasks. Actually, they do not seem to do even quite as well as sixth-graders (though I must admit I have not tried them out on sixth-grade tasks). A few examples will show you precisely what kind of tasks college-age students can do, and how well.

In the test items which follow, the students are supposed to find the word or phrase in the second sentence which does the same job in *its* sentence as the word or phrases printed in CAPITAL LETTERS in the first sentence. The percentages placed next to each item are the percentages of students of college age able to find the right answer. All these items concern sentence subjects, but are drawn from a larger pool of items testing various grammatical concepts.

(96%) Many BIRDS go south during the winter.

Most ¹infantry ²soldiers during
World War II ³carried ⁴Garand
⁵rifles.

(74%) FEW come back.

In the ¹middle of the ²lake will
be found a ³small island ⁴crown-
⁵ed with a single tree.

(39%) Which color do YOU like best?

This ¹one suits ²me better than
the ³other. It makes no ⁴differ-
⁵ence to me.

It is obvious that many students do not have any reliable sense of what constitutes a sentence subject when they are confronted with such confusion factors as can be seen in the second and third of the above items,—inverted sentence order and repeated words. But I believe

the above items illustrate a type of teaching device which could be effective. It stresses patterning and structure rather than grammatical terminology, and encourages the formation of true concepts rather than mere verbalizations. Notice that the device completely avoids grammatical terminology. This type of device can in fact be used for teaching almost any type of grammatical concept. How much of this is relevant to English composition? I do not know, but I am reasonably sure that unless the student gets a feeling for sentence patterning, as he can do if he is given training in solving these "grammatical analogies" problems, his own sentence patterns will show many obvious defects. Research on the effectiveness of teaching English grammar in improving English composition has been mainly negative, but until this research has been repeated with improved methods of teaching English grammar, I will remain unconvinced that grammar is useless in this respect.

The reports of one of our student teachers at Harvard have given me considerable cause for optimism about the structural approach to grammar, which turns out to be so clear and frustratingly simple that we wonder why it has not been tried before. Our student teacher took over a class of high-school seniors of widely dispersed abilities whose previous, regular teacher had thrown up her hands as far as the teaching of grammar was concerned. She started teaching with the "guessing game" approach I have described here—beginning with simple components like subjects and predicates, nouns and verbs. One thing she discovered rather early was that the technique did not work well with *printed* sentences. With *spoken* sentences, the students caught on much more quickly. Furthermore, this inexperienced student teacher discovered that the students were easily guided by pointing out the implications of their wrong answers. For

example, if a student said that "blue" in the sentence "The sky was blue" was a verb, the teacher would ask, "Then would it make sense to say 'The sky was bluing' (or 'blued' or 'had blued')? At a later stage, sentence building rather than sentence analysis was stressed. Starting with a simple sentence proposed by a student, the teacher worked with her students to add various kinds of phrases and clauses, with a view to demonstrating how the various kinds of complex and compound sentences could be constructed. She claims that as a result of this the students' written work improved immeasurably, the students volunteered the comment that they very much enjoyed grammar now, and that they understood certain simple and basic facts for the first time. I am not quite sure how to evaluate this report, since I would like to see the technique tried by experienced teachers on classes of known ability, but I regard it as encouraging nevertheless.

6. *Saying exactly what you mean.* One of the most frequent faults in my graduate students' theses is the failure to use terms with their proper referential functions. This sort of thing comes out even in the simplest of all sentence patterns, the copulative sentence. A student will write, "Let *a* be a set of mutually exclusive classes," when he actu-

ally means "Let *a* be *any one* of a set of mutually exclusive classes." It is as if he wrote, "Tom was a group of boys at the camp," when he meant to say, "Tom was one of a group of boys at the camp." I am sure all of you could give me better examples. What to do about this frustrating state of affairs? The tendency towards abbreviation and ellipsis seems to be strong, and I think it would be effective for the instructor to collect many, many examples of this sort of thing, to help the student see this tendency in himself and others.

7. *Saying it with style.* Style is like personality; indeed, perhaps style can be equated with personality (though I feel this is stretching a point). Above all things, let us not dampen style when it is associated with a personality. In freshman English, there will be those whose personalities and styles are just forming; rather than dampening them, let us bring them out. This must be done in an atmosphere of freedom; it cannot be done with a constraining, copybook spirit. I have no special trick or gimmick to bring this about, except to suggest that any challenge, almost a dare, is worth making if it will make students feel free to develop in their own ways, to write about things as they themselves see them rather than with the imagined perspective of another.

Using Semantic Concepts in the Teaching of Composition

MARY ELIZABETH FOWLER¹

As a discipline with many implications for English teachers, general semantics has often become a basic or considerable part of the Freshman course in composition. The thesis of these remarks is that semantics as a body of knowledge does not necessarily belong in such a course, but that many semantic concepts

can be used in accomplishing more effectively the usual primary purpose of the composition and literature course: the training of more effective and careful writers, and of more critical and comprehending readers. Such goals can hardly be reached *without* some discussion of semantic principles, even though the term may not be used; since clarifying abstractions, understanding meta-

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phor and connotative language, for example, have been taught long before Korzybski.

The difficulty in beginning with Hayakawa's book or some such text is, in a sense, the difficulty with beginning at the verbal rather than at the experience level. Having once begun with discussions of assigned readings, the teacher may find students saying, "But we *know* all that. It's just common sense."

By beginning, as Korzybski recommends, with experience or facts first, and proceeding to generalizations about language, the teacher follows the natural order of learning, and discussion of language revolves around the students' own experiences in listening, observing, reading, writing, and reporting. From these activities enough semantic problems arise naturally to provide the semantically oriented teacher with a wealth of material for a discussion about language.

By starting with the students' own logical lapses in writing and reading, the teacher avoids the smug retort, "But we know all that," by which the student means he is able to detect other people's semantic confusions. Anyone who has taken one of the seminars at the Institute of General Semantics at Lakeville, Connecticut, knows how its members come fresh from lectures at a rather advanced level to the lunch table at which they begin to work on the examples in their own speaking of the things they "know" not to do. This grass roots approach to language seems to be effective with freshmen, who learn much from working on the problems in their own writing, speaking, and reading.

The course (a two-term course in composition and literature) begins with some brief assignments in observation of language problems. Students write paragraphs on the failures they have noticed in their own use of language for communication, and the resulting confusions. They talk in class of the times when

misunderstandings have arisen because of difficulty with words. They are asked to write, in report language, about an incident of disagreement, in which the use (or misuse) of words has proved a stumbling block to understanding. Such examples as these are given:

One afternoon, while we were sitting in the student lounge, the topic of the difference between religions and nationalities came up. Almost everyone insisted that Italian was a religion and not a nationality. It was hard to convince them that there are Italian Jews, Italian Catholics, and Italian Protestants.

At an American Legion meeting, I was asked to make a report of what I had done in the way of assisting immigrants during their first days in this country. As I spoke, I used the term "100% Americanism," which appears in our charter and constitution, and was immediately challenged. For the purpose of the records, I had to give my interpretation of that term, and in no time at all, others did the same. We had more than eleven ideas, on the subject, and have not yet reached an agreement.

In one debate, we were debating whether the United States of America is really a democracy. One student said that the United States was not a democracy because the people did not put democracy into practice. Another boy said we had a democratic government because of our constitution. He believed that democracy meant a country where the laws were democratic and whether it was put into practice was optional. No conclusion was drawn and everybody was more puzzled than before over what a democracy was.

This kind of exercise, in addition to bringing out illustrations which the teacher may use to discuss such problems as classifications, directive language, and the fact that one word may have many meanings, emphasizes to students the need for study of ways to avoid confusion in communication.

Since the majority of students in the course are preparing to be teachers, other assignments emphasize observations of language as it is used by children and adolescents. Students are asked to report on child language, noticing the

kinds of sentences children use at different ages; their systems of classification (are all four-legged animals 'kitty'?); what words have many meanings; what words are invented; what words carry strong feelings ('not,' 'naughty'). Students preparing for teaching in secondary schools are asked to record observations of the adolescent's use of slang, of language used to gain acceptance by the group, for attaining status, to prove he's grown-up, or to keep other adolescents in the dark.

A discussion of levels of usage—a common topic for any freshman composition course—gives rise to other assignments in observing and recording. Students report on shifts in levels of usage by speakers on the radio or television; they point out the shifts from standard usage to colloquial in speakers they admire, and discuss the purposes of such shifts. The results of much high-school teaching of usage as either 'right' or 'wrong' emphasize the need for such study. Students are asked to write down the usages for which they might be criticized as teachers by the principal or a member of the P.T.A., lump indiscriminately "ending sentences with a preposition"; "stringing sentences together with 'and-and-and'"; "youse guys"; "I seen it"; "wanna, gonna"; "ain't"; and confusion of "shall" and "will."

This kind of training in observation emphasizes increased sensitivity to language, and awareness of the way language is used by communicators—an emphasis recommended by Dr. Charles Fries and Dr. Robert Pooley, among others, as an effective way of improving language usage.

The weekly theme in the course is another source for the discussion of language problems. One full period each week is given to discussion of papers. Part of the writer's problem is finding what he has to say; thus many theme topics are left to student choice. Begin-

ning paper topics are often alike: freedom, tolerance, democracy, brotherhood. Often such papers have received acclaim in high school because of the approved sentiments they contain. An example for discussion is a student's paper on "Freedom." The paper begins traditionally: "What word can better express the American way of life." Freedom is defined as "doing as one pleases." Fine phrases abound: "great defenders of freedom," "yoke of suppression," etc. The writer explains that babies hate restraint (if their hands and feet are held), and that animals strain at the leash "to become free."

No one notices that the words "free" and "freedom" are here used in widely differing contexts, from the animal to the highest human level. The sentences are fine-sounding, well written technically. One (the most uncritical student) says this is a "superior paper." Another, hesitantly, looks dubious, and says it sounds like several papers written for high-school contests.

The class is asked to write down definitions of freedom, and these are read around the class. Most are the same: "the right to do as we please." One or two students add, "as long as it doesn't interfere with anyone else's freedom."

It seems time to lower the level of abstractions in the discussion. Students are asked to name one specific freedom that we have in the United States. The freedom of the press is mentioned, but some mention the limitations on the press. The freedom to take any job we want is mentioned, but others ask, "Are Negroes free to do this? Jews? Catholics?" Similar discussion takes place on other freedoms: religion, education, etc. As the class ends, several students ask to have their papers back to rewrite, saying, "My paper was like that. Now I know what's wrong with it."

The class works on abstractions in this way through the term. Assignments grow

more specific. Students become increasingly more critical of general statements, and of undefined terms.

Like the study of abstractions, the analysis of metaphor can profitably provide material throughout the term for study in writing and literature. Such teaching is interrelated with that of some of the basic principles of the English language: the fact that one word in English may have many meanings, and that English has increasingly used one word in many functions: noun, verb, adjective. The class discusses the denotative use and metaphorical extension of words beginning with simple body terms: head, heart, foot, mouth, eye, and proceeds to animal names: cat, dog, pig, etc., to consider how words used metaphorically often carry strong connotations. In the study of the newspaper and the news periodical, slanting through metaphorical use of verbs is discussed. For the unadorned "he said," the news writer often substitutes the more colorful (but strongly slanted) "brayed, chattered, hiccuped."

Students who have written both literal and metaphorical contexts of their own for other simple words—water, star, fire, stone—, and who have noticed that the fire may be in the fireplace, or in her eyes, or in "fiery words," are somewhat more ready for the study of metaphor in poetry. The usual position that in prose words mean what they say, while in poetry they always mean something else, is no longer tenable. Related topics of study may result from this one: word order as a basic principle of the language and the relation of change of order to change of function and grammatical classification, as well as complete change of meaning.

The study of connotative (affective) language is related and important. Students marking a list of words with plus, minus or zero as to their favorable, unfavorable, or lack of connotations, find

they react very differently as individuals to some very common words: kitchen, home, hearth, desk, freedom, pencil, mother, school. The word *desk* has favorable connotations to a married woman with three children to whom it means "at this time (i.e., sitting at my desk) I'm my own boss;" to a Spanish boy recently from Argentina, it means "writing letters to people I haven't seen in years"; to another, "a mechanical drawing course I liked." But to some it has strongly unfavorable associations: "a big, heavy old desk I hated to dust." And to one (there's one in every class) the term means "the American way of life." Pressed to explain, he adds: "We have freedom to work and to be able to go to school even though it does mean some work. On this desk we practice this freedom."

A more difficult area of study for many students is in the concept that the word is not the thing it stands for. One way of reaching an understanding is through the study of grades. When the instructor abandons the usual letter grades and gives a simple series of checks for papers, with emphasis on the comments about thought, organization, sentence structure, students are troubled and often demand the grade to "know how I'm doing." Discussions about the bases of grading, the subjectivity of grades on themes, are of major importance to students who have often been graded arbitrarily each time they put pencil to paper. A few, disregarding the instructor's comments about serious sentence structure errors, ask, "How can I be failing? There is no 'F' on my paper." Others cease to notice the checks, and look eagerly for comments, thus growing increasingly more independent of reliance on the symbol. The absolute meaning of the symbol for many students is indicated by one student's comment: "I know it's a 'C' paper, but if you'd put 'B' on it, I'd feel better."

Many of the exercises discussed might be used with students from the seventh grade on. Despite the seeming simplicity of some of them, analysis and discussion of such language uses might lessen the confusions in the use of language by the adult. A curriculum committee recently deliberated for four hours on a problem, and the impasse was finally resolved when one member said to another, "It just occurs to me that when you use the word 'curriculum,' you mean something different from what I mean when I use the word." The confusion caused by the use of the term "hurricane alert" by the weather bureau to mean "possible danger," while the Civil Defense used it to mean "immediate danger," caused untold damage, and pos-

sibly much loss of life in Connecticut's recent hurricanes. Such illustrations indicate the necessity for including some semantic principles in a course designed to train adults to think, write, and speak more critically.

Students who pursue the course with the same instructor the second term, are usually the first to spot generalizations, to respond critically to papers, to notice the use of opinion without supporting facts. When they verbalize about the course if they do), they say it has helped them to become more critical of writing, reading, and speaking—their own and that of others. This seems a legitimate and primary purpose of the course in freshman composition.

Professional Method and Freshman Composition

WILLIAM M. SCHUTTE¹

The average college teacher of English, I believe I read somewhere recently, spends about 90% of his time teaching non-English majors. Many of us teach composition to students whose major interest is not even in the humanities. Our job is first to motivate these students, and then to make our teaching effective. I should like to talk about an approach to this job which brings English composition for the engineering or science student into a significant relationship with the work he does in his major field. Before I talk about this approach, however, I should like to speak briefly about the student and his course of study.

One of the most troublesome problems an instructor encounters in teaching the humanities to undergraduate students not majoring in the liberal arts is the resolute insistence of these students on putting the "real" courses, the "professional" courses, in one category and

the "gab" courses, the humanistic and social studies—with the possible exception of psychology—in another. We all make such distinctions, of course, but the professional student—whether he is an architect, engineer, premed, chemist, physicist, or mathematician—finds between the two types of course a vast gulf; toward the one he takes an entirely different attitude than toward the other. And his attitude toward each governs both the amount and the quality of the work he puts into it. The talented professional student will tell you, if you pin him down, that of course he agrees with you on the importance of the humanistic and social studies. He has been told by people whom he respects that these are important to him and to his future career. He accepts their valuation. But in practice, he will first study his technical subjects, and then with the energy still remaining he will attempt to do his best in his humanistic and social studies courses.

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One reason why the gulf exists for the professional student is that in his professional courses he knows—or at least feels he knows—what his teacher wants. He is at home. In his other courses he is not at home; he does not know what his teacher wants of him. Obviously we cannot begin to teach him effectively until, first of all, we have gained his confidence, then made him feel at home in the humanities, and finally gotten him to make our subject his own while he is taking the course.

Another reason why the professional student insists on the distinction between the two types of courses is that, as he sees it, the non-professional courses—and this is especially true in the freshman and sophomore years—have no significance for his life as he now sees it. In freshman composition, to get down to our own field, he is usually asked to write short essays on subjects which should be, but usually are not, of any concern to him; or he is asked to write what are in effect critical essays on works which frequently he has not enjoyed reading. And life, he is sure, does not consist of reading formal essays, listening to discussions of them in the classroom, and feeding back to the teacher some of the ideas which have been brought out in the discussions. A teacher may convince him of the value of good style: he may be willing to grant, theoretically, that a good prose style is useful. But he has very little real interest in it, and in the long run he will work at it only when he is forced to do so.

As a result of all these things, the humanities are on the outside circle of the student's educational interests. They must be plowed through for the degree. In themselves they have little or no meaning for him.

In recent years at Carnegie Institute of Technology—and I am sure at other professional schools as well—we have

been moving toward an integrated education for the professional student. I do not mean superficial integration, in which courses are merely *tied* together formally, but real integration, in which all his courses *work* together to produce the trained professional man. This integration the student himself should instinctively recognize; if there is no recognition, the integration is of little value to him. We do not pretend at Carnegie Tech to have achieved an ideal, integrated education. It would be foolish to expect that that ever can be fully achieved. But we do feel that we have made some progress.

Some years ago a committee of our College of Engineering and Science met to consider the problem of integrating the students' education. They began with this question: "What is the main task of the engineer?" Their answer was: professional problem solving. Since this is so, they reasoned, problem solving should be at the heart of the engineering course. These engineers and scientists made a careful distinction between, on the one hand, professional problems and, on the other, academic exercises and simplified, sub-professional problems. To ask a student what temperature must be maintained inside the windshield of a standing automobile to melt ice on it in zero weather is a mere exercise requiring the substitution of given quantities in a formula or formulas which he already knows. But to ask him whether it is feasible to defrost an auto windshield in the same way an airplane windshield is defrosted—by running an electrical current through the glass—is a genuine professional problem which can be solved only after careful study and thought.

The committee to which I have referred concluded that all successful problem solving at the professional level requires the use of a single basic method, which it presented as follows:

Stage 1. Define the problem

Collect and analyze the facts in relation to the original question in order to fully discover and define the problem.

Stage 2. Plan its treatment

Determine what values, principles, attitudes, and basic practices are applicable to the problem. Plan the means of dealing with the facts in the light of these ways of approach.

Stage 3. Execute the plan

Carry through the plan so as to reach a decision, product, or result. (Often the decision does not end the problem but clarifies or changes the issue so that the problem is started over in a new aspect.)

Stage 4. Check the work as a whole before using the solution

Go over the results, first systematically, then realistically in terms of use, and at last with reference to the general knowledge and experience of that field.

Stage 5. Learn and generalize if possible

Take thought to find what can be learned that may be of use in future problems.²

If you consider the five stages in the problem-solving method which I have just read to you, you will find, I think, nothing startling. You may well decide that you have been using the problem-solving method for many years in dealing with your own problems. And of course you have. You have been doing so because you are professionally trained. My guess is, however, that you only began using this method when you reached the point of professional competence. Today the method is second nature to most of us, if not all of us.

As the engineers looked over their program after making up this statement about the problem-solving method, they found themselves using few professional problems and many sub-professional problems and exercises. They set about, therefore, to reverse the balance. Since method was of primary importance, they began to place less emphasis on subject matter than they had in the past. They produced new laboratory manuals for chemistry courses which instead of telling the student precisely how to do an experiment and what equipment to use in performing it, gave him problems to solve and let him work out his own method with equipment of his own choice. This, I need hardly tell you, is not the conventional method of procedure in the laboratory. Since method, once again, is of primary importance, less emphasis is now being placed on getting the right answer to a problem and more on the use of sound methods for working toward its solution. The answer as an answer becomes secondary in importance. It took some time, but eventually all of the engineering and science courses were based primarily on problem solving.

It is apparent that if a common method is used in engineering and science courses, the humanistic and social studies will be even further out in left field as far as the student is concerned—unless, of course, they too can be integrated with the engineering program.

If one looks ahead at the writing of engineering and science graduates, or of those engaged in any of the professions, one discovers that some of their major professional problems are actually writing problems. The solution of these writing problems does not require the writing of critical essays, or narratives, or familiar essays. It involves the ability to analyse with sound method a complex situation and to produce a carefully thought through, sensitively balanced piece of writing which will get *exactly*

²From B. R. Teare, Jr., "Content and Method in Professional Education," in *Education for Professional Responsibility*, (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1948). Dean Teare's article illustrates the application of the problem-solving technique to an engineering problem.

the response that is desired of its readers.

If one could introduce into the course in freshman composition genuine writing problems of the professional type, one could bring English composition in out of left field and put it in the center of the students' professional course of study. Such a move would have two advantages. It would provide the much-needed motivation for the student: he would recognize the validity of the problems and also of the professional method in which he is being asked to handle them in his English composition course. In addition, it would provide a better preparation for the type of problem which he may expect to encounter when he enters the world of practical affairs.

You will be wondering what we mean by a genuine writing problem. We do not mean one drawn from the business world. Here is one which I have used recently. Most of you, I assume, are familiar with Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Some of you may be teaching the book right now. You will recall Philip Carey's friend Thorpe Athelny. You will remember that Athelny takes Philip in when he is destitute and helps him to find a job and that Philip eventually marries Athelny's daughter. The problem, which I gave orally, since professional men usually receive their assignments orally, is this:

A friend of your is opening an art and artist's supply shop in London. He plans to spend most of his time on the continent buying pictures and attending to the affairs of his other shops in Paris and Milan. He wants to hire a manager to run his London shop and to take full responsibility for it when he is abroad. In addition to taking care of the routine business of running a shop, therefore, the manager will sell paintings (he must have a considerable knowledge of art), keep the accounts and handle funds, write letters to prospective buyers and weekly reports for the owner.

Thorpe Athelny has been suggested to your friend as a possible manager. You have known Thorpe for several years and know all the facts about him which appear in Maugham's book. Before he talks to Athelny, your friend writes to ask your candid opinion on whether or not he is the man for the job.

The conventional theme topic which this problem parallels is: Write a character sketch of Thorpe Athelny. How does the problem differ from the theme topic? Primarily in putting the student in a real situation, one in which he has to communicate to *someone*, to a specific individual, the owner of the shop. It means that he must communicate more than information: he must communicate to the owner with great accuracy, not merely his carefully considered impression of Athelny as a person, but his carefully considered impression of Athelny as a potential manager of a particular shop. It means, finally, that he must keep in mind a three-cornered personal relationship. If, on the one hand, he oversells Athelny as a potential manager, he stands to lose the respect, if not the friendship, of the shop owner. If, on the other hand, he does not do Athelny justice and therefore deprives his friend of a fine job, he will have a burden on his conscience for years to come.

The student is faced with a difficult problem, one which must be handled with considerable finesse. We cannot throw a problem like this at him and expect him without training to solve it successfully. What he needs—and what he does not have when he comes to us—is method. He is faced with a genuine or professional writing problem and the best method I know for solving it is the professional problem-solving method which our Engineering and Science colleagues have reduced to the statement which I read to you a few minutes ago.

Let us see how this approach works out for the problem which we have been discussing. Step One is "*Define the prob-*

lem: Collect and analyze the facts in relation to the original question in order to fully discover and define the problem." What is the problem? Obviously the student must first decide whether Athelny will make a good shop manager for the particular shop which his friend is planning to open. The student goes to the text, re-reads the appropriate portions of it, and comes to certain conclusions about Athelny's character and abilities; these he matches against the qualities required in the manager and reaches a decision about the man's fitness for the job. He then realizes that his real problem is to transfer from his mind to his friend's mind an accurate picture of Athelny as manager of the art shop. And the picture he transmits must be in every respect consistent with the recommendation which he makes about hiring the man for the job.

Step Two is "*Plan its treatments*: Determine what values, principles, attitudes, and basic practices are applicable to the problem. Plan the means of dealing with the facts in the light of these ways of approach." Before the student gets down to specific planning on how he will present the material, he must ask himself a series of questions. What effect will the fact that this is a confidential report have on the content? Will he say the same things in his letter that he would say if Athelny himself had asked him to write to the owner a letter of recommendation? He has a great deal of information about Athelny. How much of it is pertinent? Shall he give a recommendation and back it up, or shall he use the evidence to lead up to a recommendation? In what order will the qualifications be taken up? On what *principle* will they be ordered? How shall he handle Athelny's understanding of Art? He is, after all, an amateur writing to a professional. What tone shall he adopt? Should it vary in different parts of the letter? Only when these and other ques-

tions have been answered, can he jot down a rough plan for the report.

The third step is "*Execute the plan*: Carry through the plan so as to reach a decision, product, or result. (Often the decision does not end the problem but qualifies or changes the issue so that the problem is started over in a new aspect)." The student's job here is to follow out his plan by writing the letter. In the midst of writing he may find that he is not giving the impression he intended to give. If so, he must back up and redefine and or replan the problem. Then he must execute the revised plan.

Step Four is "*Check the work as a whole before using the solution*: Go over the results, first systematically, then realistically in terms of use and at last with reference to the general knowledge and experience of that field." At this point the student will be tired, and unless he is accustomed to using sound method he will stop, or he will do a superficial job of checking. What should he do? First, he should check for completeness and accuracy of impression. He will want to be sure that he has not neglected to provide evidence on any of the qualities required in the manager. He will want to be sure that he has not overemphasized certain qualities at the expense of others which are just as important. He will want to be sure that no word or phrase will give a false or misleading impression. After he has checked each detail, he must check the overall impression given by the letter. He must go back to the original problem and be sure he has solved that problem and not another. Finally, he must check to be sure he has not unwittingly violated any of the conventions which have been adopted for letters of this kind.

Step Five is "*Learn and generalise if possible*: Take thought to find what can be learned that may be of use in future problems." Classroom discussion fre-

quently helps the student to verbalize what he has learned. This step is at the same time the most important step of the five and the most easily neglected. What has the student learned? In this instance he should have learned that there may be a difference in what is expected on different occasions of reports on the same subject; that one must be careful in tone, sometimes varying it within one communication; that order depends on the function of a communication and the effect which is desired. These and other acquisitions are only really learned, we feel, when they can be clearly verbalized. We try to insist, therefore, that the student verbalize at some point what he has learned from a problem.

Now that I have indicated the method which we wish our students to use, which we have borrowed in a sense from the scientists, I should like to make a few observations. First of all, we do not point out to our students the similarities between the method they use in tackling problems in English composition and the method they are using in their technical courses. If our course is well taught, they will recognize themselves the similarity in basic method. Nor do we take the students through a formal, systematic routine for handling each problem. To do so would be to turn active problem solving into mechanical manipulation of a formula. Instead we work with the specific problem and its requirements. We pick out a solution which is poor because the writer has not defined his problem. Then we lead the students in class to see how the failure to define the problem has caused the failure. When planning causes difficulties, we get the students to see why planning is essential and to ferret out the significant questions to ask when drawing up a plan. We are working, therefore, toward a methodical approach to problem solving in communication, but one which does not reduce itself in the

student's mind to a formula or a set of "tags." We are assisted in our attempt by the type of problems that we use. Since they are problems of the professional type, they require professional methods of solution.

I should like to point out also that we do not teach a course in letter writing. When the student leaves college he will have to solve a variety of writing problems. It is appropriate therefore that we give him a variety in his course in English composition. We have asked him to write memos, reports, essays suitable for publication in specific national magazines, exam question answers, physical descriptions, articles for high-school papers, and to handle many other writing jobs. We look toward the development of three things the professional man really needs if he is to write well: a flexible instrument for communication; a tested method of attacking writing problems, and the confidence in the instrument and the method which can only come from having successfully used them in a variety of situations. Our graduate, we know, will be faced sooner or later with very difficult problems in communication, but he should never have to face them with that hopeless bewilderment which must be felt by those who, because they have had no opportunity to come to grips with real writing problems, have no idea how to begin to solve them.

Teachers, as you are well aware, are seldom able to do all the things they claim in public that they are able to do. The integration of our program at Carnegie is not the answer to all problems, but the adoption of professional problem solving as the basic business of most courses at the school and the use of a common method have helped us to achieve some of the important goals of professional education. As far as English composition is concerned, they have

helped, it seems to me, in two directions.

First of all the use of the professional type of problem has helped us to motivate. Our students, as I have pointed out, come to us with an understanding of the importance of communication. But they fully expect—as in high school—to be asked to write narratives and polite essays on subjects they know nothing about. In other words, they expect to be bored stiff. Instead they are given real problems, which differ only in subject matter from problems they may expect to have in the business world. Sometimes we go so far as to point out the similarities for them. Sometimes we convert genuine communication problems from industry into problems involving subject matter from the campus. The students readily recognize, for example, that the problem which I have discussed today calls for a letter very similar to letters of recommendation they will some day write about men whom they know no better than they know Thorpe Athelny.

The second benefit from the use of professional problems and the problem-solving method is better teaching. When the student approaches an ordinary theme topic, his selection of materials is generally guided by the necessity of finding enough solid matter on a given subject to meet a 500- or 1000-word requirement. On the other hand, the professional problem, like almost every writing problem in real life, requires selection on the basis of function. The question which has to be answered is: What material will I need to *do this job*? Not: Do I have enough material to complete the assignment? In the teaching of organization, too, this new approach is very useful. It is difficult to teach the value of sound organization in a vacuum. The student tends to obey rules—and sometimes formulas—for organization without much understanding. In dealing with the professional problem, however, he discov-

ers that organization is extremely important. The one question that he must always answer is: What organization will be most effective *for this particular job*? Whether he places his recommendation at the beginning or end of his letter depends not on any arbitrary rule, but on which will get the precise reaction he wants from the owner. The same functional test must also be applied to determine the order in which Athelny's qualifications are listed. Another advantage of the professional type of problem is that it points up the importance of getting the right word to do a job. In selecting words and phrases, students handling ordinary theme topics usually need concern themselves only with level of usage and accuracy in conveying information. In solving the professional problem, every word becomes vitally important. In writing to the shop owner, shall the student refer to Betty Athelny as Thorpe's "mistress," as his "common-law wife," or as his "wife"? What impression will each make on the shop owner? Should he say that Athelny was "enthusiastic about" Spanish Art? Or "infatuated with" it? Or just that he "loved" it? Which will convey exactly the impression the student wants to convey?

The professional type of problem and the professional technique for solving it have provided our teachers with an approach to the teaching of English composition which they have found most successful. Our students are not only interested in the problems; they fight over their solution, and they learn because their work means something to them. When they leave us, they have not solved all their writing problems. Some students inevitably disappoint us. But we do feel that we have developed in all of them an attitude toward writing and a method of approaching writing problems which will enable them to go on learning after they leave freshman composition. And our real goal, after all, is not

to have them write today a well-integrated, literate essay—though we are very happy if they can do so—but to give them the tools which will enable them

to handle effectively the challenging writing problems which make or break a man in the world for which we are preparing him.

Teaching Pilot Courses over Public Television Channels¹

WILLIAM G. FIDONE, *Recorder*²

A major problem confronting educators today is the vastly increased enrollment of students in all levels of educational institutions. Classrooms of twenty to thirty are now chimerical visions on an ever-receding horizon. 'Why Johnny Can't Read' is the rallying cry for those who, among other things, bewail the over-population of school rooms. The problem is serious and cannot be dismissed lightly as merely the inevitable backwash of periodic wars. The 'war babies,' as they are innocuously dubbed, have now become a thorn in the body of our public education system, a thorn which will not be pricked out. The present potential of all possible approaches to education must be realized if the problem is to be dealt with adequately.

One person who has already faced such a problem, and capitalized on a potential, is Professor Harold Whitehall of Indiana University. Faced with the prospect of nation-wide increase in pupil population, overburdened, understaffed instructional services, he sought and found, through the medium of educational television, a means of bringing to the average person the kind of individualized education that is the essence of real learning. Through such a medium, he has found one possible solution to the dilemma of mass education.

We must look forward, Professor

Whitehall maintains, to a day when a master teacher, given the accoutrements of an electronic age, will supplant Wylie's 'little red school-house' and Hunter's 'blackboard jungle' through the medium of daily educational television. Such a vital use of this newest medium may alleviate the pressure of constantly increasing student bodies further aggravated by the correspondingly decreasing number of teachers.

In his position as chairman of the Department of Linguistics, Professor Whitehall has, under a grant from the Ford Foundation, created a series of twenty-four television programs entitled "Language for the Layman." Sponsored by the Division of Adult Education and Public Services, Correspondence Study, the programs are centered primarily about the application of linguistics to literature. Broadcast each Tuesday and Friday at 2:30 P.M. over WTTV Bloomington, Indiana, direct from the studio on campus, the series has attracted a variety of 'home students,' ranging from the busy housewife through the farmer to the business executive.

At the recent Conference on College Composition and Communication, Professor Whitehall presented a kinescope of one of the programs entitled "General Metrics." During the showing he discussed in an informal and casual manner the rhythmic patterns and functional structures of word order as illustrated in various selections of prose and poetry of different languages. Students enroll-

¹Recorder's report of Part 2, Second General Session, 23 March 1956, New York—Statler Hotel. See *College Composition and Communication*, May 1956, for report of Part 1.

²Bronxville School

ed in the home-study course are given daily assignments that are mailed in to the University, graded, and returned with specific criticisms. The television course thus has all the earmarks of the typical classroom situation, including even the ubiquitous blackboard, chalk, and eraser.

But, educational television has its disadvantages. Quite literally, it is not so easy as it 'looks.' Timing, for example, is a sensitive factor. It precludes the use of a live audience because of the possibility of 'tangential' discussions. Stage presence is another. In addition to being an experienced educator, a scintillating and intriguing personality, and a mellifluous speaker, one must also be able to follow a myriad of "off-stage" directions while actually engaged in instruct-

ing the audience: cameramen's signals, floor diagrams, stage director's cues, sound man's gestures, commercial (in this case, "credits") inserts, etc. Indeed, the actual 'teaching' is often so enmeshed with stage directions that, as Professor Whitehall remarked disconsolately, "one must be able to teach with his subconscious mind."

Nevertheless, if every significant advance has its unique impediment, educational television still has much to offer in the way of increased 'pupil' population, greater instructional diversity, and maximum teaching skill. Every viewer is a potential student, every television device a potential audio-visual teaching aid, every master teacher a potential individual tutor. The possibilities, then, are unlimited.

Composition vs. Communication — The Wrong Debate¹

ROBERT E. TUTTLE²

Within our CCCC there is one point of discussion which emerged at our earliest meetings. It continues to be discussed, on both a formal and informal basis, and it remains the area in which the most heat is generated. "*Which gives the more effective course organization for teaching written communication—the composition approach, or the communication approach?*"

I feel I must warn you at once that I shall not be exactly neutral. My position will be more nearly that of "a plague o' both your houses." And of course my own background is bound to influence my judgment. At once I confess that my specializations were English and philosophy, and that I never had a speech

course in my life, let alone a communication course. On the other hand, some years ago certain students did have to suffer through my efforts to teach speech, and I have an administrative responsibility in a department made up of three sections—English, Speech, and Psychology. In the department are beginning and advanced courses in both composition and speech—all taught to college students of engineering and business administration. Yet to another group we teach three terms of what we are sure is a very successful communication course.

Obviously, should I take the position that a communication course must be ineffective or superficial, I should win the just anger of the communication instructors; and if I should hold that teaching composition and speech in sep-

¹A paper presented in Panel II, 24 March 1955, CCCC Spring Meeting, Hotel Morrison, Chicago.

²General Motors Institute

arate courses is old-fashioned or inefficient. I could well be asked why I had not cleared the beam from my own eye.

Yet it is not from this practical necessity but from real conviction that I say that there are very strong arguments for both approaches.

The communication group is on strong ground when it holds that speaking, listening, and reading skills are important functions that must not be neglected. And the fact is that in a majority of colleges today they *are* neglected. I did a little catalog searching on this—I simply selected the first hundred in the pile—and found that of one hundred liberal arts colleges, only *sixteen* required speech at all. It was an optional alternative to literature courses in four others. Thus 80% appear to neglect speaking and listening.

The communication people are likewise in a tenable position when they argue that the four phases or communication are inter-related and hence that teaching them in a single course is possible and perhaps desirable.

In its turn, the composition group is on strong grounds. Writing is not an easily learned skill, and the time devoted to it must not be reduced. And surely high standards of accuracy are necessary to clear, effective, and acceptable writing, and those standards ought not to be lowered.

Now, believe it or not, I know very few composition teachers who hold that people should not speak and listen. (At least *they* should speak and their *students* listen.) And I know *no* communication teacher who argues that the advantage of his approach is that it produces inaccurate and ineffective writers. It would seem that we really have much the same end-result in mind, and that we might simply try our different approaches, experimentally check our results, and reach a rational decision.

Why, then, does our debate at times grow so acrimonious, and why the frequent undertones of deep emotional involvement? In short, what are we really fighting about?

It seems to me that the problem is only partly ideological—and I say this well aware of the group of communication people who claim for communication a special content or subject matter beyond training in skills. It seems to me that the struggle actually centers on *control of the class hours traditionally assigned to the freshman course*. The composition teacher fears that the time devoted to composition or to composition and literature combined will be reduced. Already he regards as nearly desperate his task of teaching competent writing in the six semester hours usually devoted to composition. If part of this same time must go to speaking, to listening, and to reading improvement—let alone to psychology, graphics, electronics, anthropology, sound engineering, semantics, logic, philosophy, and citizenship,—it seems inevitable that the standards for acceptable writing must be lowered. There just won't be time to teach much writing.

The composition teacher is not foolish. He is simply paying for past folly. There once really *was* a composition course that was centered in Latinate grammar, that was devoted to purely literary subject matter, that meticulously ignored the student's own practical interests or the requirements of everyday living. Even today, as W. Nelson Francis pointed out to us last year, handbooks of English pay only lip service to structural grammar.

The composition teacher is not blind either. The attack was directly upon his special class hours. In their anxiety to see that students got the training they badly needed in speaking and listening, the advocates of the communication approach attacked the curriculum at its

weakest point—the traditional composition course. It should be noted, I think, that many communication teachers were once specialists in *speech* or in one of the humanities, not in composition or even in English literature. Because of their backgrounds, they saw real student needs which the composition teachers felt no obligation to satisfy.

What has been the result?

In many schools, the total time devoted to reading, writing, listening, and speaking, PLUS required literature, is exactly what once was given to composition plus literature. College catalogs are hard to interpret, so I shall use examples, all from liberal arts curricula, where I can be corrected by my fellow speakers.¹ As nearly as I can tell Michigan State requires nine quarter-hours of communication skills, plus nine of "humanities. Ohio State gives nine quarter-hours of composition and literature, plus fifteen in the humanities. At West Virginia, the regular liberal arts course gives six semester-hours of composition and six of literature. The integrated liberal arts curriculum on the same campus gives six semester-hours of communication, plus—I think—I had a really hard time on this one—six semester-hours of literature. In the hundred liberal arts colleges whose catalogs I checked, the minimum requirement, including literature but not other humanities, was six semester-hours, whether it was composition or communication. The maximum in a school offering communication was fifteen semester-hours; in a school offering composition it was sixteen. The mode for each group was the same—nine semester-hours.

Now certainly this was not a statistically conclusive survey. I checked only 100 schools, and I may have erred badly in my interpretations of the catalogs. But it is enough to show, I think, that

where speaking and listening have been *added* to reading and writing, there has not been a corresponding increase in class hours. There is more to be done, and no additional time in which to do it.

The competition for these hours has not been entirely bad. It has resulted in each group's strengthening its position continually. The communication people, as our past and present workshops amply demonstrate, are facing squarely up to their biggest problems and may some day solve them. They are discussing ways of getting a teacher adequately prepared in *all* phases of communication, and sufficiently interested in *all* phases that no phase will be neglected. They are aware of the administrative anomalies involved and are consciously experimenting with new ways to overcome them. They seem to be alert to the dangers of concentrating so much on organization that other significant aspects of good writing are overlooked.

The composition people have benefited too. They could not very well point to the inadequate training of communication teachers without trying to do something about completely untrained teachers of *composition*. Their courses are becoming more realistic, even have got around to dealing with the composition problems the student must face in everyday life. There are positive hopes that sound and usable concepts of rhetoric and structural grammar will eventually be incorporated into handbooks.

All this is to the good. But there is another side to the picture.

As each group strengthens itself, it returns with greater enthusiasm to its attack upon the other—the chief means, it appears to each group, of spreading its own doctrine. On the campus where communication wins, the student is robbed of hours that badly need to be devoted to learning to write. On the campus where composition remains en-

¹The panelists were Hermann Bowersox, Homer Goldberg, and Theodore B. Strandness.

trenched, the student is robbed of guidance in learning to speak or listen. On all campuses the argument lowers the prestige of both groups and provides excellent ammunition for the technical specialists as they too compete for every student-hour they can possibly get.

Is this the battle we should be fighting? Is not a better cause rather the one for the *total* good of the student—the whole human being to whom we profess our academic devotion?

What does the whole man need that we together are best equipped to help him attain? 1. The ability to write so that he communicates clearly, accurately, and economically. Even a first-line supervisor spends 7.6% of his time in writing, exclusive of figuring and other mathematical calculations. This figure I draw from a study by Robert A. Bolda on how supervisors spend their time.

An aside here. When I cite this and other figures from this study, I do not wish to imply that *instruction* in an activity should bear any direct proportion to the amount of time devoted to that activity in everyday life. The *reductio* on this is easy—supervisors spend over 9% of their time in walking, and a greater proportion doing nothing productive at all! It remains true, however, that if an activity is a learned activity, we do need to give our students some help in effectively carrying it out.

To get back, 2. Mastery of the writing and research skills specifically needed for success in other college courses. This means that our student should know how to use the library, how to write "term papers," how to write examinations, and so on.

3. Mastery of the fundamentals of the specific writing skills on which his very likelihood must depend. This means he must be able to write letters, directions, reports, and other communications that are the life blood of any functioning organization. He doesn't learn these things

by osmosis, as many of the letters of application and reports written by teachers of English will clearly demonstrate. To transfer his training from a general composition course he needs special help.

4. The ability to express himself, in writing, with logic, power, and dignity on those important questions which concern him as a citizen of his community, nation, and world.

5. The opportunity to enjoy the satisfaction that comes from expressing his soul in a work of art. It may not come to much—but should he not have a chance to see?

6. The ability to talk with his fellows in the small, informal problem-solving situations, which will determine a large part of the contribution he can make in his everyday work and in his life as a citizen. First-level supervisors spend 16.7% of their time in such activities.

7. The ability to speak and listen effectively in more formal business and professional conferences, to organize them, and to provide leadership for them. A supervisor spends 12.2% of his time in such meetings.

8. The ability to give short talks before groups, and either short or long talks before large groups. There's quite a difference between these situations, and that difference should be recognized and provided for.

9. A chance to know the delights that come from expressing himself in the great arts of drama and debate.

10. Mastery of the *skill* of reading, to save himself time and increase his comprehension.

11. Mastery of *critical* reading, to sharpen his judgment and make his conclusions more sound.

12. An initiation into the joys, the sorrows, the challenges of the reading of literature, that he may enrich his life, enlarge his soul, and know human beings in their complexity as human beings.

13. Mastery of the technique of listening, to increase his understanding and evaluation of what others say, whether it be in his business or social life, his life as a citizen, or his life as a full human being.

These are what we owe our students. These are the objectives to which we have dedicated our help, some of us in one area, some in another.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, we are quibbling over nine semester hours!

In all common sense, what *should* we be doing?

First let us put in proper proportion our present debate over methodology. Let us then raise our sights to the greater task to which we are now giving far too little attention.

We might as well recognize, for example, that at colleges of education the communication approach will be most useful. Teachers in elementary schools are certain to use this approach. And from the hints dropped in *The English Language Arts and in Language Arts for Today's Children*, it looks as if high schools will also go more and more to an integrated course. If these people are going to *teach* communication they might as well start to learn something of the approach in their first college course.

I suspect the large state schools and others which must take run-of-the-mine high-school graduates may also find the communication course most useful. It has been my experience that students of minimum ability or motivation accept instruction more readily if they can begin with informal talks and oral composition, and find sneaked in, as it were, necessary written work. I am afraid such students have a prejudice against writing. Where they got it, I cannot of course guess.

At such schools or at others in which the communication course has had good success, I see no reason to attempt any

dislodgment. Instead, it seems to me, we should make every effort to plan and require advanced courses in the areas now receiving too little attention.

At most liberal arts schools and other schools when the student is more carefully selected, separate courses are still the rule. And as we saw, speaking and listening are generally neglected. There the first move should certainly be to institute required courses in speech, both elementary and advanced. Place must be provided for listening. Courses must also be required to cover the other areas just outlined.

Have we a chance to accomplish these goals?

I think we do. There are many straws in the wind.

First is the fact that the necessity for training in writing and speaking is now widely recognized among those who hire our graduates. It has even become a cliché that the abilities to write and speak effectively are at least as important to professional advancement as other technical and professional skills. A less flattering recognition of this importance is the repeated statement from the same group that our graduates are completely unable to write and speak, or even spell.

Second is the growing recognition of the importance of the humanities in the educational scheme. A case in point is the growing love affair between the College English Association and leaders of business and industry. So is the significant fact that when the great corporations recently announced their programs of financial support for colleges, liberal arts schools came in for their fair share. The practice of giving support only to technical education or research has been abandoned.

Now I myself would not class courses in composition and speech or in communication among the humanities. They are, I think, primarily "tool" courses. But

the significant point is that other people *do* class them there and that ability to write and speak well are ranked high among the benefits of a liberal education.

A third straw in the wind is found in the current reaction against over-specialization, or, as the engineering educators call it, "fragmentation" of courses. If specialized training is postponed to the graduate level or regarded as the responsibility of the employer, there obviously will be less pressure on the curriculum for increased hours to devote to specialization.

There remains the task of convincing the deans and the educators in other departments that more hours must be devoted to the language arts. This will not be easy. It will require good techniques of human relations, a careful analysis of the practical needs of our students, and reasonable proof that we can give the courses that meet these needs. I have no sure-fire formula for this. I believe strategy will vary on every campus. But I do have two general suggestions.

First, the goal cannot be reached from an ivory tower. We must go among our colleagues and know them and their problems. By giving assistance to them with their own papers and speeches we can build a reputation as a department that can give genuine help; and if we do give good help, they themselves will recognize its potential value to their students. They will be ready to listen to us when we tell of the even more important values we can help attain.

Second, we can set up advanced elective courses in the language arts. They

must be carefully planned and developed, preferably with the assistance of people in other departments and the employers who will use our product—the student. These courses must be taught by top-notch instructors filled with genuine enthusiasm for what they are doing. A few satisfied students will do a wonderful advertising job. And if such a course becomes required in even one curriculum, the demand that it be added in related ones comes very quickly.

It is a challenging sales job, and we must deliver on any promises we make. But surely it is worth our best efforts.

By 1970, 4,500,000 students will crowd our campuses—33.1% of all people of college age. There is no reason to believe that they will come to us better prepared. Every one of these will need to know how to speak and write effectively, and to read and listen with skill and appreciation. If we are to meet this challenge, we must obtain the class hours necessary to do the job.

If we are going to get these hours, we are going to have to fight for them. Other people want those same hours. Let's not just sit back and let them be grabbed from us. Neither let us make shift by crowding yet more our present tragically inadequate time. We'll simply end by doing worse what already is not being done well enough.

We have had entrusted to our care the finest of our country's young men and young women. We have primary responsibility for most important areas of their educational development.

We've been back-peddalling altogether too long.

Let's fulfill our responsibility.

Let's go after those hours.

CCCC Bulletin Board

CCCC Chairman Irwin Griggs, in his letter summoning members to the St. Louis meeting, wrote: "CCCC is now intensifying its efforts to increase its membership. Our growth in three or four years from 300 to 1200 is encouraging, as far as it goes, but it is just a small beginning for an organization that is preparing to meet the staggering needs of the next decade. If we are to be a representative national group and if we are to work effectively for better teaching and for a proper professional status for our teachers, we must include in our membership a far greater proportion of teachers of composition and communication than we do now. You can help by talking or writing to your colleagues, especially the younger ones, about CCCC, by urging them to come to the St. Louis and Chicago meetings, and by showing them copies of our quarterly, *CCC*. If you have any ideas on ways to increase membership, write to our membership chairman, Professor Richard Beal, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts."

Skimming the NCTE Annual Reports of Officers and Committees . . . NCTE members and subscribers, total gain 1955-6, 2,847 (CCCC 116, 10.8% over 1955); net income \$33,686.37 for a total liquid assets of \$98,043.12 . . . On Secretary Hook's timetable: 50,155 members by 1959-60; *English Language Arts*, Volume III 1956-57, IV 1957-8, V 1958-9; new CTE headquarters 1957-8; assistant, understudy 1959-60 . . . Director of Publications Max J. Herzberg: in preparing *ELA*, Volume III, MS. "commas were deleted in Singapore, sentences were added in Cairo, substitutions made in Madrid, and whole chapters rewritten in Jerusalem" . . . Council best-seller, *Books for You*, 24,043 copies . . . CCCC Chairman Griggs: 1955-6 "marked CCCC's acceptance of its role as a genu-

inely national organization"—Philadelphia in 1958, San Francisco in 1959 . . . In the *English Journal* before May 1957 a special issue on the reading and study of poetry, Richard Corbin directing, R. W. Stallman contributing . . . *College English* 1955-6 accepted about one-fourth of 528 unsolicited MSS . . .

Current bibliography 1954-6 of college teaching of English ready for publication in *CE*; plans to fill 1945-54 gap later . . . Major portion of *Guide to Comparative Literature*, Charlton G. Laird director, to be published by the American Library Association . . . Continued collaboration between CTE and the National Council for the Social Studies toward series of nine pamphlets on core ideas and procedures for teaching English and social studies in combination . . . Progress under William M. Gibson toward issue of *College and Adult Reading list*, an "annotated reading list of best books in literature, music, and art" . . . Progress also on the *Dictionary of Current English Usage* reported by James B. McMillan and Margaret M. Bryant . . . a new Committee on Literary Scholarship and the Teaching of English, Lewis Leary chairman, to narrow "whatever gap exists between the teacher and the scholar" . . . Publication in the 1956 *Bulletin* of the Reprint Expediting Service, American Library Association, of a list prepared by Erwin R. Steinberg's committee of paperbacks English teachers want kept in print . . . a Committee on the Study of Television, Louis Forsdale chairman, that met *eight* times during the year to discuss awards to television programs and routine availability of kinescopes for school use . . .

Small wonder President Cook reports: "During the past year progress has been made both in the expansion of our efforts and in the consolidation of our influence."

Is your name on the current CCCC roll of members? The list is drawn up soon after the NCTE Convention in November and mailed to CCCC officers about January 1. CCCC's fiscal year begins August 1. One sure way to get on the CCCC roll and stay there is to send dues for both NCTE and CCCC in the spring.

Retiring President Luella B. Cook in her *Council letter* (*English Journal*, November, 1956) celebrated the presentation at the St. Louis convention of *The English Language Arts in the Secondary School*, the third volume to appear in the NCTE series on the English language arts. Dr. Angela Broening, Associate Director of the Curriculum Commission and director of the production committee responsible for Volume III, is scheduled to present it in the opening session and to discuss its contents on Saturday morning. President Cook points to secondary schools as a crucial level in contemporary education—an area in which fostering maximum individual growth, maintenance of common standards, and meeting society's need often clash with peculiar intensity. President Cook has served NCTE long and effectively as member of the Executive Committee and successively as Second Vice-President, Chairman of the Secondary Section, First Vice-President, and President.

Perhaps no professional problem of the immediate future more generally concerns CCCC members than educational television. As required reading, to be added to the reports of closed-circuit television at New York University (CCCC, October, 1956) and of public television in this issue, should be added the excellent survey of current practice and critical opinion by Henry W. Knepler in *College English*, October, 1956.

Reporting for the NCTE Committee on College English for Non-Major Students, Mr. Knepler includes a list of references and a list of "telecourses" drawn up by Lawrence E. McKune of Michigan State University. This is the basic survey to be filled out with additional news of educational television as it appears. A limited number of reprints of the article are available from NCTE headquarters at twenty cents each.

Four varied, perceptive, and generous reports of the CCCC New York Conference fill the equivalent of an entire page in the *CEA Critic*, May, 1956. The reporters are CEA Directors Kenneth L. Knickerbocker, Carl Lefevre, Donald J. Lloyd, and CEA Vice-President Henry W. Sams. To quote Carl Lefevre's report slightly out of context: "Perhaps a little more of this inter-organizational cooperation would be a fruitful approach to some of the multifarious problems of our multiple organized profession."

Puget Sound Notes, the bulletin of the Puget Sound Council of Teachers of English, in its May 1956 issue, reprints from *College Composition and Communication* four contributions originally from members of the Freshman English staff of the University of Washington. The articles are Bertha Kuhn, "Devices for Teaching Organization." (CCC, Feb. 1956), Viola Rivenburgh, "Teaching Outlining: A Method." (CCC, Dec. 1955), Agnes Colton, "Dictation—A Device for Testing and Teaching Spelling" (CCC, Dec. 1953), and Elinor Yaggy, "Let's Take the Guesswork Out of Punctuation" (CCC, Dec. 1953). Permission to reprint articles from CCC and thus give them wider usefulness is generally and promptly granted upon request to the Editor.

The grant made last December to educational television by the Ford Foundation provided for the transfer to the Educational Television and Radio Center of certain information activities formerly handled by the Washington staff of the National Citizens Committee for Educational Television. One of the Center's main responsibilities under this new program is the dissemination of information on educational television to national organizations active in the ETV movement.

A bi-monthly publication, *NET News*, is being published by the Center for a broad distribution to the public. The newsletter reports on developments in the educational TV movement at both local and national levels. The first issue of this publication was mailed early in April and the June-July issue was mailed June 1. Anyone who wishes to receive *NET News* should write to Educational Television and Radio Center, 1610 Washenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan. This service is without charge.

Instruction in Using the Library at the University of Vermont

ROBERT D. HARVEY AND MURIEL HUGHES¹

For at least twenty-five years the library staff at the University of Vermont has been attempting to impart to new students a few basic facts of library use. For twenty-five years no one has been quite sure whether the time and effort spent have been worthwhile. No one has been able to prove that formal library instruction teaches more or faster than the students' own trial-and-error methods. Nevertheless, new methods of instruction are tried as old one are discarded. Over the years a few basic gains have been discernible. The most important of these have been the achieving of a high degree of cooperation between the library staff and the English Department in the area of library instruction, the provision of continuous instruction through the establishment of a library Reference Department and an Information Desk, and the publishing of an annual edition of *UVM Libraries: A Manual of the Collections and Guide to Their Use*.

Library instruction in the late 1920's and 1930's consisted of half-hour tours

of the library given to all freshmen in groups of twenty-five before the opening of school. There was time for a few words of explanation at the card catalog and periodical indexes, but the main purpose of the tour was to establish the location of the essential parts of the library and certain basic tools of library use. This in itself was a large task for a small staff with limited time.

In the 1940's, during the war years, with an even more limited staff it became necessary to discontinue the tours, and library instruction fell to the members of the English Department who taught freshman English. During this period library orientation varied with each instructor. Some instructors continued to bring their classes to the library, while others were content to talk about the library in the classroom. Both the quantity and the quality of library instruction varied considerably.

In 1951 with a decided increase in its trained professional staff, and with the establishment of a Reference Department, the library felt that it was prepared to assume again some of the responsibility for the instruction of fresh-

¹University of Vermont

men in the use of the library. The advice of the English Department was sought, and it was agreed that a member of the library staff would meet for one hour during the first week of school with each section of English 1, a required composition course for freshmen. The meetings were to be held in the classroom rather than in the library and would be devoted to a formal lecture presented by a member of the library's reference staff. Prior to the lecture, a mimeographed fourteen-page pamphlet on the library was distributed to all freshmen. Part of that first lecture was devoted to an attempt to counteract the library and librarian stereotype by presenting the library as an interesting as well as a useful place to spend some time, and librarians as persons with professional training in the use of library resources ready to assist those who ask for help. This was done primarily by contrasting the 19th century philosophy of libraries and librarianship in American universities and colleges with that of the present day. The second part of the lecture dealt with various types of library resources: books, periodicals, reference books, newspapers, etc. Each type of material was introduced by giving specific examples of interesting and unusual information that could be found in these materials. For example, the periodical collection contains very early volumes of Charles Dickens' own magazines, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, in which four of Dickens' novels first appear. Reference works were introduced by relating some very unusual, if not always practical, facts that could be derived from them. Government documents were enlivened by showing the class a copy of the classic best seller, *The Care and Feeding of Infants*. The last part of the lecture was somewhat more practical. As a part of the English composition course, each freshman was required to write a re-

search paper. In 1951 this was done the second semester. The remainder of the library lecture was devoted to the technique of compiling a bibliography, with the lecturer actually working out a sample bibliography for two or three different subjects. In this way it was possible to illustrate methods of finding information in each of the various types of material. The difficulty, of course, was that this information was given the first week of classes and would not be used until the second semester. In general, this first lecture attempted to cover too much ground, and it showed considerable vacillation between being a practical demonstration of library use and being an amusing collection of anecdotes on books and libraries. The latter was the direct result of a feeling that the lecture must be interesting at all costs.

In 1952 several important changes were made. The research papers were moved up to the first semester, and although staggered throughout the entire semester, they, at least, were scheduled closer to the library lecture than previously. The lecture itself showed a slight trend away from the anecdotal toward the practical. More time was spent on developing bibliographies on sample subjects. The most important addition to the instruction program in 1952, however, was the introduction of a "library problem" which was given to the students in each English section to be completed by the next meeting of the class. The problem covered use of the card catalog, the periodical indexes, and basic reference works. Part could be answered from information in the second edition of *UVM Libraries*, the mimeographed pamphlet now expanded to eighteen pages. For the section dealing with the card catalog, an actual card was reproduced on the problem sheet and all questions dealing with the catalog could be answered from it, thus sav-

ing the library catalog cards from undue wear and tear. To answer the questions on reference works, it was necessary for the student to consult the work itself. A question on filing required the student to rearrange in correct order a group of eight subject entries and a group of eight author entries. No one was able to solve this particular problem. For the section on periodical indexes, an entry from the *Readers' Guide* was reproduced and the students were asked to identify the various parts of the entry, again saving the guide from being torn apart. The sequence, then, for the 1952 library orientation program was: first, the distribution of the library manual; second, a lecture given during the first week of classes; third, the distribution of the library problem at the end of the lecture—the completed problem to be turned in to the instructor at the next meeting of the class; fourth, the correcting of the problems by members of the library staff. The corrected problems were returned to the English instructor, who, after noting the grade, returned them to the students. A numerical grade was given and the instructor informed as to what could be considered a passing grade.

In 1953 the library's instruction program underwent further changes. The lecture remained substantially the same, but the problem was completely revised. A card was again reproduced on the problem sheet, and questions were asked concerning the various parts of the card. This was in contrast to the multiple-choice type of question asked the previous year. The filing question was retained, but simplified. The section on reference works was in two parts. The first was a matching question which could be answered from information supplied by the library manual. The second part asked specific questions, the answers to which could be found in a certain selected list of reference works. The

most important change in the problem was in the section dealing with periodical indexes. An actual page from a superseded index was attached to the problem and the questions asked could be answered only from the attached page. This had the advantage not only of saving wear and tear on the bound volumes of the indexes, but did away with all possibility of copying, as each page was, of course, different. This year also, the manual, *UVM Libraries: A Manual of the Collections and Guide to Their Use* was completely revised and expanded (24 pages) and for the first time was printed. A photographic reproduction from varityped copy was used as the most inexpensive printing method. In addition to providing the student with information on how to use the library, the manual provided descriptive annotations of over sixty-five basic reference works, bibliographies and, indexes. An additional fifty-eight works were listed without annotations.

The 1954 freshmen library orientation program followed closely the pattern set in 1953. By 1954, however, the lecture showed little trace of the anecdotal material that had dominated the first lecture, four years earlier. The entire fifty-minute period was devoted strictly to the practical side of using library books and tools. Seven types of material found in most libraries (books, reference works, periodicals, newspapers, federal and state documents, and pamphlets) were introduced. Most of the lecture dealt with the problem of how, specifically, one extracts information from each of these types of material. Finally, one sample subject was used to provide a step-by-step illustration of the methods just described in the lecture. Again a library problem was distributed at the end of the lecture. The problem was similar to the one used in 1953, except that a section of multiple choice questions was added covering general information of

value to the library user. The library staff again corrected the problems, and this year for the first time they returned to the classroom for twenty minutes to discuss the results of the completed problems. A fourth edition of the library manual was published with added annotations of new reference books. By 1954 it had become a regular practice among several instructors to meet their classes in the library for the first meeting devoted to the actual gathering of material for the research paper. Both the instructor and a reference librarian were available to see that the students got started in the right direction.

The fall of 1955 saw a radical change in the library's approach to freshman orientation. First, it was deemed desirable by both the English Department and by the library to give the body of the orientation program—lecture and problem—immediately before the class embarked on the required research paper. Since the research paper assignment was staggered throughout the first semester, this meant that formal library orientation would continue for the entire semester. There were twenty-seven sections of English I with no instructor teaching more than three sections. This meant that the library would not be dealing with more than three sections at one time, a maximum of approximately ninety students. Lectures were scheduled from September 26 through November 29. With lectures being scheduled at the time the students were to begin their research paper, it seemed desirable to relate the problem more closely to the research paper. Instead of an exercise in general library procedures and techniques, a problem was designed which, when completed, would serve as the students' basic bibliography for their research papers. It was necessary, then, that each student select a subject before he could begin the problem. This was done in the classroom with the aid and

advice of the instructor. Generally subjects were approved or disapproved by the instructor, but occasionally library approval was sought. When subjects were submitted to the library for approval, those for which library resources were weak could be changed. Always an attempt was made to interview the instructor in advance to discuss the perennial problems of subjects for freshmen research papers. An attempt was made to relate the lecture to the subject matter of the research paper whenever possible. This could be done when the instructor restricted the subject area for his students' papers. For example: *language* as a general subject area. The lecture again described the various types of library material, concentrating on methods of extracting information therefrom. For the first time slides were used to illustrate the lecture. The slides, made by the audio-visual department at the university, included author, title, and subject cards; the ten major divisions of the Dewey decimal classification, plus three slides illustrating subdivisions; several slides illustrating various types of periodicals and continuations; a slide showing how books are arranged on the shelf by number; a slide reproducing part of a page from the *Reader's Guide*; and a slide diagram of the library. These visual aids proved highly successful. Some difficulty was encountered in shifting the equipment from room to room. Even though all sections except one were held in the same building, it was necessary to take down the equipment, move it to another room, and set it up again, sometimes within ten minutes.

The problem itself required that the student search the seven types of material for information on his subject, noting the specific references where information was found. To be searched were encyclopedias, other reference books, the book collection, periodicals, newspapers, pamphlets, government

documents, and, if the subject dealt with agriculture, the collection of state agricultural documents. The new problem was given to students at the end of the lecture. They were required to complete it and turn it in to a member of the library's reference staff by the next meeting of the class, two days later. The papers were carefully checked by the reference staff. Although the person correcting the paper could not look up each separate item on the bibliography, it was possible to tell whether a student was using the right sources for his information and to tell in general whether he could use the tools necessary for extracting information from these sources. Whenever necessary, additional sources were suggested and general suggestions made for the students' guidance. The papers were marked satisfactory or unsatisfactory and returned to the instructor for distribution to the students. The instructor was requested to ask those who had received an unsatisfactory grade to return to the library for consultation with a member of the reference staff. The library manual, again revised, was approved by the English Department as a required text for English 1 and was sold at the bookstore for twenty-five cents. Students, therefore, attached greater importance to the manual than they did when it was a give-away item; the theory applied this year was that the closer the library orientation program could be associated with the course content, the greater would be the students' respect for it.

Since many freshmen would receive no library instruction until late in the first semester, it was felt that arrangements should be made to provide an opportunity for students to become familiar with at least the physical arrangement of the library soon after their arrival on campus. It was decided, therefore, to offer all freshmen and transfer students an opportunity to see a short instructional

movie on general library use and to participate in a tour of the library. This took place during freshman preliminary days prior to the opening of school. Attendance was voluntary, and, to entice students to the library, refreshments were offered. The students' time during preliminary days was almost completely scheduled. The movie and tours were given the day all new students registered, in the hope that before or after registration some would find their way to the library. This was somewhat wishful thinking since the total attendance for seven "shows" during the day was only 122 out of approximately 750 new students. The following day all freshmen students had two and one-half hours free in the afternoon. Three showings were scheduled for that afternoon, and the response far exceeded expectations. The movie played to standing-room audiences, and all members of the staff were pressed into service to conduct guided tours. An extra showing was scheduled for those who could not be accommodated at the previous three. A total of 207 attended that afternoon making an average attendance of 52 students per showing as compared to 17 per showing the previous day. A total of 329 participated during the two days, but many additional students went on a tour without seeing the movie. It is to be hoped that next year more time will be made available to the library for this type of orientation.

In an attempt to discover the English Department's reaction to library orientation in general and to this year's program in particular, a questionnaire was given to all members of the department who taught freshman English. Fourteen questionnaires were sent; eleven were completed and returned. The answers revealed that all instructors favored some type of library orientation for freshmen and that such orientation should be given by the library staff rather than by

the English Department. Nine agreed that the amount of time spent instructing the freshmen was about right; two thought more time should be spent. All except one favored taking time from English 1 for the lecture and problem. All instructors said they supplemented in some way the information presented by the library, usually by discussing the library chapter in the freshman text. The timing of the questionnaire did not permit a valid answer to the question of improvement in the students' research techniques, but both the English Department and the library staff felt that, in general, the students' accomplishments in library use were equal to or greater than the previous year. Asked whether the library should be concerned with a formal orientation program for advanced and graduate students in English, four agreed that it should be, while seven felt that this was the responsibility of the English Department. Comments and suggestions on the whole program were numerous. Several instructors felt that the basis of the program should be the guided tour. They felt that it

would be best to teach the library *in* the library where students could actually see the tools and resources as they were being explained. Finally, all instructors agreed that the library's approach to freshman orientation this year, since it was more directly applicable and far better timed, was a very great improvement over previous years.

The library may now have arrived at the best solution to the problem of library orientation for freshmen as far as the University of Vermont is concerned. However, since the problem of evaluating the results of the program has not been solved, it is difficult to tell. For many years, during many different library regimes, instruction in the use of the library has been a real concern of the administration and staff of the University Library. One cannot help hoping that these years of trial and experimentation have at least created *some* awareness of the potentialities of not only the library at the University of Vermont, but of all future libraries that these students will use and enjoy.

A Why and How for Remedial English

VIOLA RIVENBURGH¹

"I never could learn English."

"What's the use of trying?"

"Practically my whole senior high-school class is in bonehead English. I'll be in good company anyway."

These are some of the remarks the instructor hears as he watches his students in Remedial English file into the classroom the first day of term. Their words and faces express nonchalance, frustration, shame, even downright unhappiness. One or two well-dressed girls fight back tears as they covertly take note of their classmates and perhaps

find themselves without the comforting presence of others of their own sex. In the class may be boys patently from small towns, two or more students much older than the rest, a sprinkling of Japanese or Chinese students, one or more Negro boys. Usually most of the students in Remedial English classes are boys who have managed "to get by" in the classes of overburdened English teachers in high school.

If the college instructor of such a heterogeneous class is a seasoned one, he knows that his is not a mere teaching assignment. He knows as does the

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administrator that the Remedial English course is one of the most important in the English curriculum. He also realizes, as does the administrator, that one of the puzzling problems is the fact that although entrance requirements would seem to ensure relatively well-prepared freshmen, differing regional or high-school backgrounds and requirements do make a wide gap between adequately and inadequately prepared freshmen. Looking ahead, the staggering increase in high-school enrollments will surely widen this gap and increase the numbers of students in Remedial English courses. This will pose another problem for nearly every college department of English. Of necessity, more of the courses will be assigned to teaching fellows, expected to achieve their goals with little or no teaching background, with inadequate or unsatisfactory teaching material, and almost no standardization of syllabus.

My own feeling is that too often Remedial English has been considered merely a substandard English course where a little extra drill on spelling and common grammatical errors is expected to close the gap between students and prepare them for their general English courses; where almost any method of handling the course, and almost any teacher would be adequate for the job.

It does not seem to me that the accomplishments of students in the past have substantiated the correctness of these attitudes. Having taught the course, and having conferred with several hundred so-called "substandard" students over a period of years, I have mentally tabulated their common weaknesses and special needs and have outlined a procedure adapted to these which has proven successful for me. In the hope that my findings may be of use to others, I venture to present them here.

The first phase of the work is the winning of the students. Almost without ex-

ception, they are retarded because of some mental attitude hampering their success, or some actual mental bloc. A knowledge of "working" psychology is invaluable to the teacher, who, in the first week or so, should find out from his students whether handicaps result from feelings of inferiority or frustration. In an informal talk to the class at the first meeting, the instructor can dispel in large part the feeling of shame at being put in "bonehead" or "zero" English. He knows that many of the students in Remedial English are borderline cases in other subjects, and he will make it clear to his class that success in college will be determined to a great extent by ability to speak and write acceptable English. Though he warns that to fail this course might mean failure to remain in college, he will assure the numerous older-than-average students, many of whom have been out of school in the army or navy for several years, that this refresher course will aid them to achieve an even break with the students just graduated from high school. He will assure the foreign students and those with dialect problems that with the will to do so they may overcome their language difficulties; the indifferent students, of whom there will be many, that they *can* master their individual problems. Each one is asked to state these difficulties in writing, together with any contributing factors which he thinks will be illuminating to the teacher.

As soon as possible the instructor must see his students in conference. To enable him to do this, classes should be small, never over twenty students. Since a great part of the effectiveness of the course will be determined by success in substituting a liking for a dislike of English composition; an interest for a passive or openly resentful attitude; a feeling of joy in accomplishment for dread of failure, the initial talk is very important. In the conference the instructor will

discuss quite frankly the problems the student has confided in his first paper, and those indicated in a subsequent class paper which has been carefully graded. In addition, the student's scores in his entering aptitude tests, together with the weaknesses shown in his papers, will usually be quite convincing evidence of his need for the course.

After the students' confidence is won, the second phase begins. In it the students must begin acquiring the skills so basic to the main objectives of the freshman English courses. These include: some command of a standard dialect, and a knowledge of some conventional terminology. By and large, the student in Remedial English has never read; his ear has never been trained to accepted communication patterns. Helpful at this point will be his introduction to a passage from a literary work. The passage should not be too difficult, but should be one in which the flow and rhythm of words is marked. The student is instructed to copy the paragraphs and to read them aloud until the passage is almost memorized. The class should now begin to get some practice in assignments which start the members toward their own discoveries, and an enjoyment of the language. The passage just assigned may provide the material and the motivation for the initial study of grammar and parts of speech.

Most of the students admit to almost no knowledge of parts of speech. They would not be able, perhaps, to interpret a teacher's comment on their paper, "that is not a happily chosen adjective," not to mention a notation which suggests that "the noun complement is a gerund." I should recommend explaining grammatical terms from a functional standpoint beginning with the parts of speech: their use as subject, verb, object, then proceeding to their function in the phrase or clause. As long as the instructor does not use it as an end in

itself, diagraming of sentences is an excellent visual aid. "Why, it's just like mathematics," a student remarked one day when I had sent the class to the board. "You can draw a sentence; make a problem of it." He had begun to see that grammar is descriptive; he could learn it by a sign language which could untangle language ambiguities. Subjects of sentences could also be put in parentheses or underlined once; verbs in brackets, or underlined twice; adjectives could be indicated by a single parallel line; adverbs by double parallels; subordinate clauses could be indicated by wavy lines; coordinate clauses by dotted lines. For example: /The/ pretty/ (girl) who called //yesterday// [is] /ill/.

When the student has mastered this sign language, he will almost certainly begin to write more acceptably. I have found in my own experience, as have most of my colleagues in the department, that there is a positive correlation between a student's knowledge of the mechanics of composition (spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage) and his ability to write acceptably. During the second period he has been mastering some of these writing tools: a few basic rules for formation of plurals of nouns, for the apostrophe, for capitalization, for spelling, etc.

Since spelling is a general weakness of Remedial English students it is given constant emphasis. The spelling drill which is continuous throughout the term seeks to eliminate: careless mis-application of incompletely learned spelling rules, trouble with homonyms, and typical individual spelling errors in lecture notes, written papers, even in letters home. I have found that preliminary work in sorting out troublesome words in the lists of commonly misspelled words assigned for study—concentration on meaningful units such as prefixes, suffixes, roots—is more helpful than the

usual memorization by syllables. The student's interest in his progress will be more marked when he knows that in a final conference he will be tested on his own carefully recorded list of misspelled words. As they near the end of the course many students can spell correctly 80-90% of these words.

In the third phase, occupying the remainder of the term, the students should extend the knowledge already gained of rules of grammar and apply it in the construction of effective sentences. The study of punctuation, so closely allied with structure, is now begun. Most students feel that they can speak much more effectively than they can write, and it is the task of the instructor to build on this feeling—to show that the pauses and gestures of spoken English are duplicated by other means in written English.

"Let me show you how you may say something in writing you do not intend to say when you use no mark or the wrong mark," the instructor says to a class which appears to be going to sleep at mention of the study of punctuation. As he illustrates his point by putting some amusing, wrongly punctuated sentences on the board, he sees the class comes to attention. He continues, "You see, punctuation marks actually say something. You cannot tell your reader to pause without some mark to make him do so. The shortest pause mark is the comma."

Thus is launched the study of the comma. Reducing rules for its use to the following easily remembered list of words and phrases is a helpful teaching device:

- (1) series,
- (2) parenthetical,
- (3) appositive,
- (4) direct address,
- (5) absolute phrase,
- (6) long introductory phrase or clause,

- (7) restrictive: phrase or clause restricts, closely tied into thought—no commas used,
- (8) non-restrictive: phrase or clause can be omitted from the sentence without greatly affecting meaning—commas used.

The use of the semicolon leads naturally into the study of the comma fault or splice. The student now begins to see the relationships of punctuation to sentence patterns. Having now begun to understand these sentence patterns, he begins to realize also that the knowledge of grammar may be useful to him in comprehending the patterns in reading material. Students now enjoy finding and indicating errors in the margin of specimen student papers which may be handed out for them to correct or which may be included in the text as workbook problems.

I believe that but little writing should be required of Remedial English students before midterm. Reading, then copying paragraphs whose points are clearly made in an easily recognized topic sentence well supported by illustrative details and examples, will serve a number of purposes. Chief of these is calling attention to (and thus helping to eliminate) the short, choppy paragraphs which the student now realizes are one of his writing weaknesses. If desirable, this exercise may be followed by an assignment in which the students write a paragraph, perhaps using the same methods of development as the model paragraphs studied. Some practice in summarizing paragraphs is also valuable, and précis writing may be done if time permits. The thirty class periods must always be devoted to the work most needed by the class.

At this point I should like to urge the use of the minimum of textual material. The ideal text, I believe, would be a combination handbook of grammar and reader. The grammar section of the book

should present as few rules as simply stated as possible. The practice exercises should not be too numerous or too difficult. As I have indicated before, it is not wise to expect or to require too much in our Remedial English courses. We do not often require our more advanced composition students to be able to tell us exactly how infinitive, gerund, or participial phrases are used. Why then should we insist that the Remedial English student indicate in the blanks of his workbook that the infinitive phrase he finds in a sentence is the direct object of the verbal *to have*?

I believe that all instructors will agree that some reading assignments should be included in the Remedial English syllabus and that the material used should be interesting and stimulating, with good question helps, theme subjects, and vocabulary lists. The University of Minnesota committee reports that 20% of college freshmen read "less efficiently" than the average eighth-grade student. Assuming that Remedial English students are drawn from this 20%, it will be the task of the instructor to achieve in his group a more desirable reading rate, comprehension, evaluation of material, and personal attitude toward books and reading. Reading tests at the beginning of the term will aid in determining reading ability (as measured by performance tests such as the Wechsler), and in choosing a level of material which will insure growth of student interest and ability.

How is this level of material to be determined? There are numerous tests for readability and human interest values of material (such as the Rudolf Flesch). In testing individual student's reading ability at the University of Washington Remedial Reading Clinic, one miss in 100 words was taken to indicate that the material is in the easy or pleasure-reading class; 2-5 misses indicate work-type reading; more than 5,

difficult. The Flesch formula assigns scores ranging from 0—most difficult material—to 100, easy enough for the poorest reader. Applying the test to the material itself involves some use of multiplication tables and decimal points. The test would put at least some of T. S. Eliot's work in the easy class, while much of Ernie Pyle would be rated fairly difficult and dull. Shakespeare would rate as a master of human interest appeal, which would be heartening. However one might feel about the Flesch, or any other system, all will agree, I believe, that extremely readable material need not necessarily exclude literary works.

In whatever material is chosen, the student should be exposed to ideas of fundamental importance clearly and effectively expressed which he can relate to his own life experience and observations. "Both boys and girls are interested in the general subjects of sports, marriage, home, education, and in character analysis. The following essays, among others in these categories, have been found interesting and stimulating to the students:

Sports

"Too Much Football," Allen Jackson, *Current Prose*, Geist and Bledsoe, Rinehart, 1953.

"I Say Basketball's Our Best Game," Ken D. Loeffler with Harry T. Paxton, *An Approach to College Reading*, alt. ed., Everett L. Jones, Holt, 1955.

"Making Every Shot Count," Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Introductory Exposition*, Colton and Huston, Pacific Books, 1956.

Home

"The Two Income Family," Nancy Barr Mavity, *An Approach to College Reading*.

"A Miserable Merry Christmas," Lincoln Steffens, *Current Prose*.

Education

"University Days," James Thurber, *Current Prose*.

"Fire on the Hearth of Humanity," James Michener, *Current Thinking and Writ-*

ing, Bachelor, Henry, and Salisbury, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951.

"What Should Colleges Teach Women?" Mirra Komarovsky, *Current Thinking and Writing*.

"Preparing for College," Lincoln Steffens, *Introductory Exposition*.

"I Never Went to College," Calvin Kinney, *Introductory Exposition*.

"The Autobiography of an Uneducated Man," Robert M. Hutchins, *Better Reading*.

Character Sketches and Biography

"Sergeant Levesque," Ernie Pyle, *Introductory Exposition*.

"Dr. Charles and Dr. Will," Helen Clapsattle, *Introductory Exposition*.

"The Assassination of Lincoln," Carl Sandburg, *Better Reading*.

Students can be shown through such models the value of their own experiences as a source of something to write about. How much writing may be done should be determined by the individual class, the level of its students, and their achievements during the term. That there will be achievement no one can doubt in a course whose goal has been the fullest possible training of slow students in systematics thought and communication skills.

It is clear that I have no radical cure-all plan for teaching Remedial English. No matter if I have not found the plan I have outlined to be completely successful with all students; no matter if one or two of them seem to end the term writing as badly as when they began. Of one thing I am certain. At the end of the quarter I feel that my work has been more effective with this than with any other plan of study I have used. I have tried the conventional workbook system with its emphasis on rigorous drill. I have tried the more slowly paced course, and none have worked as well as this system which is frankly eclectic: which varies approach from remedial reading to functional grammar to brief paragraph and essay analysis, and ends with some brief excursions into writing near

the end of the term. My plan has seemed more reliable than others when students' grades (in tests given at the end of the term, checked against grades given earlier in the term) are higher than when other methods have been used.

But better than the improvement he has made in grades is the smile on a student's face when he says, "Sure glad I took that course last term. Couldn't have passed English 100 without taking it." Even more heartening after a lapse of years are the words of some upperclassman or senior, "I've just told a buddy who's entering U. this fall to sign up for Remedial English. It helped me make the grade through college."

Helpful Texts for Remedial English

Dunbar, H. H. and others, *Writing Good English*, Heath, 1951, 362 pages.

All the necessary material for a complete elementary course in composition. Notably easy to use.

Emery, Don W., *English Fundamentals, Form C.*, with John M. Kierzek, Macmillan, 1956, 256 pages.

An elementary and thorough review of the essentials of clear and correct English.

Everett, E. M., Dumas and Wall, *Correct Writing*, Heath, 1952, 243 pages.

Combines the best features of a handbook of composition and a workbook that is noteworthy for its clarity and simplicity. Recommended as a text on fundamentals of writing.

Hodges, J. C., *Harbace College Handbook and Workbook*, Harcourt, Brace, 494 pages. 1956.

The conventional handbook of information concerning all phases of writing. Especially helpful because the information is so accessible.

Hupp, Alice Hyde, *The Mechanics of the Sentence*, American Book Company, 1937, 338 pages.

Especially helpful material pertaining to the mechanics of the English sentence.

Leggett, Glenn, Mead and Charvat, *Handbook for Writers*, 2nd ed., Prentice-Hall, 1954, 529 pages.

As a summary of grammatical usage and elementary rhetoric, this book provides a knowledge of the essentials of clear writing.

McCorkle, Julia N., *Learning to Spell*, Heath, 1953, 89 pages.

Technique based on psychological methods and common sense.

Spotts, Carle B., *Fundamentals of Present-Day English*, Holt, 1953, 314 pages.

A manual-workbook combination—grammar, usage, and vocabulary. Time-saving for the teacher. Excellent testing material.

Watts, Phyllis Welch, *From Rules to Writing*, Holt, 1954, 228 pages.

The material is graphically and interestingly presented. Application of material is realistic; development is inductive.

Woolley, E. C. and F. W. Scott, *College Handbook of Composition*, 5th ed., Heath, 1951, 344 pages.

Readily accessible information and accepted rules of usage and composition of the mid-century for persons who have writing of any kind to do.

Staff Room Interchange

If a ship may be launched virtually as a hollow hull and a poor box be hung up empty, a new department of *College Composition and Communication* may be opened without content. In future issues, whenever material warrants, this new department — Staff Room Interchange—will appear. It will present *short* accounts (500 to 1500 words) of individual items—nothing will be too minute—of the whole range of problems and procedures in teaching composition and communication.

The increasing number of graduate seminars in the teaching of the freshman course and plans for inservice training of instructors is gratifying. This Conference can properly claim credit for much of that increase. Yet, as is true at any level of teaching, the skill a teacher eventually achieves, varying as it must according to native gifts and professional zeal, grows from his own maturing wisdom and experience and from alert adoption of the successful practices of his colleagues, ideas picked up in the "staff room interchange."

Originators and adroit adapters of ideas and practices in teaching, too often for the good of the rest of us, doubt that the whole profession would profit from following or even knowing about their successes. Even if they are moved to

share their discovery, it often concerns too minute a matter to justify an article.

Staff Room Interchange hopes to promote the spread of such ideas from one office or one bank of offices in a single department to all readers of *CCC*. Contributions may describe successful—not just *projected*—procedures, for example, for discouraging plagiarism, deciding whether conferences should be voluntary or required, combating the comma splice, deciding which speech defects require referral to a specialist, effectively using the opaque projector. Since helpful suggestions often arise in reply to specific questions, it will print requests for help on aspects of the course. Since the good teacher's working file always contains specimen themes exhibiting particular virtues or vices of rhetoric, it will welcome such themes. It will print contributed lists of models for reading aloud in class to illustrate professional skills.

If the Staff Room Interchange is to appear a second time, readers must themselves unblushingly communicate, prod colleagues into communicating, or communicate in their behalf. There are only three limitations: usefulness, clarity, and brevity.

English Composition in the American University¹

GEOFFREY WAGNER²

The problem of teaching English in the first year at an American university is to bring a man on very quickly through elementary work to formal writing ability and a certain appreciation of literature. Most American universities are admirably staffed, gifted with excellent (and accessible) libraries, and indeed with every facility for learning; but from the point of view of the teacher of English the first year, or perhaps the first two years, are largely wasted. This is very evident when one is aware of the extremely thorough and mature work being done on the graduate level in the humanities.

Freshman English, which usually forms English I and sometimes English II as well in the American two-semester university curriculum, is the bane of the English teacher and student alike; in fact, a universal groan goes up across the continent at the very mention of it! In the three American universities where I have taught I found it—justifiably—the principal item on the agenda of innumerable English faculty meetings, the subject of constant change in syllabus, of endless minutes and mimeographed reports, a continual headache for the teacher as regards choice of textbook, and so on. Freshman English is invariably, throughout America, a course in English composition giving collegiate instruction in the fundamentals of structure and style, with extensive drill in the mechanics of the language. Here is one university's description of the purpose of its English I; it is representative:

- (1) to teach the student to avoid fundamental errors in written English.
- (2) to inculcate in him habits of correct and orderly communication.
- (3) to teach him to read with care and discrimination.

The course usually consists of classroom periods, weekly themes sent in to the instructor, conferences, term papers, and so forth, very much the sort of work familiar to the British secondary school teacher, the only difference being that in England it is done well before the School Certificate. Rather naturally, at the age of eighteen, it is considered irksome and onerous to all concerned. This also applies in the so-called 'Ivy League' or well-established Eastern universities, such as Princeton and Harvard; Columbia, however, is a dissenter in this respect.

The situation is no fault of the American university. The blame lies with the high schools where, so far as I can see, practically no education in English of any sort whatsoever goes on at all! This statement can scarcely be charged with exaggeration when I can admit to having met classes of American freshmen unable to spell, punctuate, understand the principles of grammar, command any kind of vocabulary, or even in some cases put together sentences and paragraphs that are in any way correct, let alone read with understanding and appreciation. Two students out of a freshman class of twenty-four which I recently tested for my own interest had never read a novel before: most of them—and these were young men with a fund of scientific information which would be envied by Sixth Form scientists in England—had confined their reading to light magazines, daily newspapers, and comic books. Yet these students were to be

¹Reprinted from *The Use of English*, Winter, 1954, by kind permission of the Editor, Denys Thompson, and the author.

²2310 Second Avenue, New York 35, New York

brought on *in one year* to read, and presumably appreciate, Chaucer and Milton. It is something of an understatement to say that in consequence a very great strain is imposed on the teacher of Freshman English, not only as regards actual classroom instruction but also in personality relationships and in many other ways. Indeed, the real difficulty with composition courses in America is that they represent an initiation into the discipline of thought itself for most undergraduates. The suggestions for teaching composition put forward by English masters in the pages of *THE USE OF ENGLISH* seem wildly Utopic to us, while those lucky Grammar School masters who can write about the problems of fluency and style in early stages seem to inhabit quite another world from our own in the U.S.A. Yet in English III, and sometimes in English II, the American student has already got to be prepared to answer examination questions on alliteration and assonance in poetry; in English IV, in his sophomore year, he will be asked—"To what extent do you think Milton justifies the ways of God to man?"

If our Freshman English sounds like a farce it is at least made an operable one by the high-voltage receptivity of American students. The present political concern about the welfare of our colleges is simply evidence of malleability on the part of students, quite a large number of whom come from what we would call working-class homes, 'see themselves through college' by odd jobs, and have a real hunger and longing for 'culture.' While this helps quick education, it also rebounds on the Freshman English teacher who, the impatient student feels, is holding 'culture' back by the reins of annoying grammatical trivia. For catalogue descriptions in the average university prospectus should be ignored. These will be laced with grandiloquent phrases about 'the function of style' and 'imaginative writing.' The fact

is that with the pressure such as it is we are lucky if we can get half of the men to write normal English, of a practical nature, by the end of the course. The ladies are generally far more advanced in this respect, principally due to letter-writing, while those rare and fortunate souls who have been to undemocratic institutions like private schools are wasting their time doing the course at all. Whenever I uncover one of these last I immediately ask for him to be transferred to a more advanced course, a recommendation, I have found, only too willingly and gratefully approved.

The majority of American men confronting the English instructor—an individual who occasionally looks for one of those vanished slippers or sticks which descended with such unsympathetic, if salutary, whacks on his own posterior in the bad old days of law and order—the majority will not be intending to take 'English majors,' that is, to pursue the study of English beyond the minimum university requirements. These include at least one 'Great Books' course, such as the English IV I have mentioned, which usually starts off with hasty readings in Chaucer and Milton. The result is too frequently an attitude, and an understandable one, of resentment on the part of the student who feels that he is wasting his time learning 'style' in English; he forgets that as a rule he is wholly innocent of any knowledge of the functions of language or of any sort of critical thought beyond certain logical scientific processes. (There has lately been a move to extend the American franchise to eighteen-year-olds.) To meet this resentment, to satisfy business-like parents and purse-proud trustees, the English teacher tries to compromise by incorporating a certain amount of professional writing into his course. He will, for instance, assign a letter applying for a job, a piece of journalism (if he is lucky, a book review or an editor-

ial), as the weekly theme. Here are two descriptions of English composition courses from different universities:

The purpose of English I and II is to teach you to do competently the kind of writing the great majority of students will have most occasion to do, both before graduation and after. That kind is exposition—the kind that has as its primary purpose, not to entertain the reader or move him, but to make something clear to him. It is the kind that is called for in examinations, term papers, and theses, and in engineers' reports, lawyers' briefs, and business letters.

The student is reassured that English is useful to him.

An advanced course in composition planned to bridge the gap between English A and such advanced courses as news and feature writing, magazine article writing, and business writing. The course will deal with the discovery, logical arrangement, and persuasive communication of facts and inferences. Special attention to book and laboratory reports, essays, theses, course papers, discussion of controversial issues.

In short—it won't hurt! You'll never know you're doing English composition!

Meanwhile the fight is to find a suitable textbook, to accommodate the students' enthusiasm for 'getting somewhere—but fast' and the necessary training in reading and writing at the same time, when he isn't looking, as it were. A number of excellent readers have been provided for this purpose, the most celebrated being those edited by Professors Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, both of Yale: yet these books never seem entirely satisfactory and new primers appear each year. Most of them contain, as sops, a number of ephemeral essays, sports accounts, reviews of the motion picture, interviews with or comments on celebrities, and so on: there will also be some pretty stiff (at least for the instructor!) scientific readings. The Brooks and Warren readers are most useful in English II and III. They consist of admirably selected passages of literature—poetry, prose and drama—with pertinent and often profound com-

ments. They are challenged as being too pedantically the fruit of the American school of New Criticism, of which Professor Brooks is allegedly the Dean. However, I personally feel that this is one place where the New Criticism—close textual analysis keeping historical and biographical data to the background—is vitally to the point. My only criticism of the Brooks and Warren textbook is that it tends to do too much for the teacher: the numerous questions appended after each selection exhaust the topic and tend to rob the teacher of opportunities for exercising his own gifts.

At the same time a constant search and struggle goes on to locate a suitable drill-book for use in composition. This is particularly hard owing to the shifting conventions in prose usage in America! I am using now two drillbooks, *Correctness and Precision in Writing*, edited by Professors Grant, Bracher and Duff (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1953)—note the businesslike title!—and Professor Perrin's celebrated *Writer's Guide and Index to English* (Chicago, Scott, Foresman & Co., 1946). Perrin (as it is known) is an index to grammar and style which most British masters would find very free and easy with the rules, I think. (Cp. 'When usage is divided in spelling a given word, ordinarily choose the simple or more natural form.'—Edn. of 1950, p. 160).

The trouble that is taken by teachers to solve the difficulties touched on in this article is infinite: constant faculty meetings, brooding Freshman English committees, revisions of syllabus, readings of new textbooks after hours and in summer vacations, the virtually personal schooling of student after student in the elementaries of the language—it is really a tragic waste of time, when all of it should have been done, as in England it is done, at a student age of about fourteen. It is no wonder that the American freshman feels resentful faced, as

a husky fullback of some two hundred pounds in weight, with the following drill:

Select the simple subjects and the verbs from the following sentences and write them in the blank spaces at the right.

Subject	Verb
Above the mantel hangs	painting hangs ³
a painting by Van Gogh.	

My own guess would be that some forty per cent of personal time, and certainly sixty or seventy per cent of individual energy, of any Department of English in an American university is appropriated to this hectic attempt to catch up with almost total lack of education and discipline in the high schools. Fortunately most English Departments I have met are run on democratic lines (sometimes too democratic for my taste!) and the work is spread evenly over all members. The Middle English expert, the authority on Carlyle or on seventeenth-century

³This example is selected from *Correctness and Precision in Writing*, Analysis of Sentence Structure, Test 6a.

baroque prose, must still spend his days teaching grown men the use of the restrictive comma and that *i* comes before *e* except after *c*. It is sheer drudgery with uncooperative students, yet it is occasionally rewarded by the presence of a budding Henry James.

The position of the average undergraduate in the matter of English composition, however, is well put in a recent novel by Hugh Herbert, called *I'd Rather Be Kissed*. The obviously admired heroine of this novel is a young lady in her 'teens who decides to keep a diary (she wants to become a famous writer in order to make a lot of money!); so this young hopeful writes, representatively:

This is going to be my own personal and private diary and not an English theme. Come to think of it, this diary is going to be the first thing that I ever wrote in my life that I didn't have to write and I can feel already that it is going to be a great relief to not to have to keep to any rules unless I feel like it. Writing is only fun when you don't have to do it.

An Open Letter to Mr. Robert Newcomer¹

Dear Bob:

Certainly I will not blame you if you accept a position in a book company at the starting salary of \$150 a week that you mention. Since I have never engaged in work of this kind, I have little idea of the satisfactions, other than monetary, which one may be able to get from it. Theoretically, publishing ought to be an educational activity more important than teaching, since the number of learners books can reach is larger. Actually since the chief objective of commercial publication must be to make money, I suppose any educational effect is incidental. And, although incidental, it might be considerable, since publishers dissemin-

ate knowledge more broadly because of the competitive pressure they are under to increase sales. Yet you do not have to talk to many textbook men to become aware that their primary interest is always in securing new texts for the mass courses in which texts are already in oversupply and that they have little interest in any other kind of material.

On this point I would like to quote from a report on scholarly publication recently approved by this University's Committee on Scholarly Advancement:

"The commercial press can be expected to back only that very limited part of scholarly publication which may be sold in sufficient volume to make money. Nearly all publications of major advances in knowledge can

¹A revision of an actual letter.

be expected to be used by so few specialists as to lose money. For example, the mathematical formulas by which Einstein made possible the exploitation of atomic energy were published in a learned Swiss journal and were of interest at first only to that tiny group of learned scholars who could read German and who could follow a mathematical argument of extreme subtlety and abstraction. Yet to have waited to publish such material until there was a commercially profitable market for it would have made the rapid advancement of atomic science impossible. This advance could run as rapidly as it did only because the few scholars vitally interested, although they were widely scattered through Germany, Italy, Denmark, England, Japan, etc., could share their discoveries through publication.

"For this reason universities have long recognized an obligation to subsidize scholarly publication selected not according to the demand of the market but according to the merit of the scholarship. Much the greater part of all scholarly publication in the U. S. today is brought out by the university presses and by learned journals which are subsidized either by universities or by learned societies."

Because the objective of commercial publication, even in the field of textbooks, must be essentially non-educational, I doubt that one can secure the kind of satisfaction in this area which one can secure from teaching. It is difficult to be a missionary and an exploiter of the natives at the same time.

The possible material rewards of commercial life are no doubt far greater, but they are also far less certain. While a teacher's income is always relatively lower, especially in "boom" times, it is also relatively much more stable, especially in "bust" times. So much more important is stability than quantity of in-

come that college professors rank high as credit risks, not far beneath bankers and physicians, and far above salesmen, for example, though some salesmen make fabulous incomes. Of course the moral qualities required to enter some professions, and the expectations society has of their practitioners, play a part even in so commercial a matter as credit risk. The worst pinch in academic salaries is doubtless behind us. A rapidly expanding student body is ahead of us, far greater than the prospective supply of teachers to service it, a condition certain to lead to a large-scale increase in professorial salaries. These will doubtless still lag behind salaries in commerce, because the superior satisfaction of the work usually makes it possible to attract the desired quality of man into academic life for about one-third less. However, professorial incomes in the future should be much more satisfactory than they have been in the past ten years.

As you yourself remark, part of the satisfaction one can get from college teaching is greater possibility for leisure. Of course, to achieve leisure you must stay out of the kind of committee work and administration in which I have been immersed, not always easy to do if you have an ardent desire for improvements that can only be achieved administratively, but such work also carries with it a superior satisfaction because it is aimed toward an objective beyond personal advancement.

A decision on whether to stay in academic life must be based on the objectives you set for yourself. If a prime objective is a relatively large income, academic life is not the place to achieve it. If the prime objective is a life of some dignity and leisure and a maximum satisfaction in one's work, then academic life has much to offer.

You have not hitherto shown much drive toward material ends. You should

ask yourself if this relative lack of interest only reflected a passing stage of your development, or is so essential to your nature as to deny you a maximum satisfaction in a life directed largely to commercial ends. I have met many people in commercial life who openly regretted not having had more time to develop themselves culturally and implied some dissatisfaction with being chained so strictly as they were to the immediate demands of profit and loss. While professors frequently lament their inadequate incomes, they seldom complain of being denied cultural opportunity, intellectual stimulation, or worthwhile goals in life. While it is natural for each of us to want to secure the full benefits of both kinds of life at the same time, it is only reasonable to recognize that each of us has only a given amount of time and strength, and that whatever portion of life is expended in one way will not be available for expending in another way.

To live without regrets is not given to man, for he has the intelligence to perceive the "road not taken" which in the end made "all the difference"; but this same intelligence can be so used as to secure for each the satisfaction of selecting that road which seemed at the time of choice to be going most nearly

in the direction appropriate to his own interests and objectives. Whichever one you choose, you will still have my affectionate good wishes on the way; but do not deceive yourself into supposing you can go two ways at once. A larger income must normally be earned by accepting more responsibility, or more risk, or by doing more work, or what is to me at least as important as all of the other factors combined—doing work which does not offer as much satisfaction.

I am in no position to assume an attitude of moral superiority on such a matter. Had I had an opportunity similar to yours back in the depression days of the 30's, when I made up my own mind, my choice might well have been a different one. Professorial salaries then were relatively much more attractive than they are now, though future prospects in the profession were much less bright, so that the situations were altogether divergent. I can say that, having made the choice I did, I have on the whole been well satisfied with the rewards I have received from academic life.

Sincerely yours,
Howard O. Brogan¹

¹Chairman, Department of English, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio

"... I wonder if much of the responsibility for the inadequate secondary school training should not be assumed by college professors. They, after all, taught English to the secondary school teachers and are teaching the future teachers. Inadequate training in the essentials of writing is in part due to the negative attitude of high school English teachers toward the mechanics of writing, and that attitude was developed, to a great extent, in their college composition courses. Their impatience with the mechanics of written expression merely reflects the impatience of their college professors..."

Edmond L. Volpe, The City College of New York
The CEA Critic, October 1956

NSSC News

The Summer Conference of N.S.S.C. met in Aspen, Colorado, August 23-25. Hosts for the conference were the officers of the Denver chapter: Richard Woellhaf, president; Abe Pomeranz, vice-president; and John W. Garrett, secretary-treasurer.

Arrangements were made by Major Charles J. Burns of Denver University, Evelyn Lewis and Dorothy Edgar of the Denver Adult Education Council, and Lt. Col. Warren C. Thompson of the Air Force Academy.

Aspen, a historic old silver-mining town, in recent years turned cultural center, proved to be an attractive and inexpensive location for the conference. (Interested groups can secure information on accommodations and rates by writing to Hotel Jerome and the Aspen Chamber of Commerce.)

Kenneth H. Harwood of the University of Southern California and President of N.S.S.C. was the chairman of the meeting. Ralph G. Nichols, University of Minnesota, spoke on the topic "He Who Sells Must Listen." He discussed desirable and undesirable qualities of salesmen and attributes most liked and most disliked by customers, based on a study of one hundred housewife shoppers.

Warren C. Thompson of the U. S. Air Force Academy talked about "Communication-Education in the Air Force's Academy." The general objective of the program, he stated, is the training of future generals for peace as well as for war. To that end, the academy aims "to turn out cadets who are humanists in every sense of the word." Teachers of English will be heartened to discover that more semester hours are devoted to Social Humanities Studies, including courses in English Literature and Communication, than to Scientific Studies

and Professorial Studies. Detailed description of the U. S. Air Force Academy English Program and of a periodical called *Chandelles*, a collection of cadet themes, may be obtained from Lt. Col. Warren C. Thompson, U. S. Air Force Academy, Denver, Colorado.

The discussion on "Communication and Industry" was led by C. J. Dover, Consultant Employee Communication and Group Relations, General Electric Company, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York. This speaker welcomes specific suggestions on the following questions: How can business and industry be of service to university people in their efforts to extend teaching and research horizons in education? How can the on-the-job service, training, and counselling to business and industry, already begun by a few pioneers in the communication field, be extended?

Dorothy Edgar, of the Denver Adult Education Council, discussed and demonstrated "Communication in Training Group Leaders." She suggested that a team of training leaders, rather than one qualified person, be used in order to dispel the notion that an expert has come "to give the word." These leaders should see to it that the group first and foremost *find the purpose* of their meetings and be held responsible for planning their own program. Finally, the speaker stressed the point of putting at the disposal of the group adequate and attractive materials on group leadership.

Erne Schubert, of Colorado State Libraries, in talking of "Communication in Community Leadership," used a case history to underline the following points. Members of a community can learn to think objectively "to examine the facts." They can learn to listen to opposing

points of view. They can discover that as individuals "they matter," and they can learn to take responsibility for doing individual thinking.

All sessions provided for wide audience participation.

The conference was evaluated by Merle F. Ogle, Air University, Montgomery, Alabama.

In the business session it was suggested that a placement and recruiting ser-

vice for N.S.S.C. be considered at the December meeting.

The group voted to hold no regular Summer Conference for 1957 only, but to meet instead in Boston of that year at the time of the S.A.A. convention, August 25-28. At the December, 1956, meeting in Chicago, places and dates for subsequent conferences will be decided.

ANNE MCGURK¹

¹Michigan State University

Articulation in Composition¹

A Report of the Subcommittee on Writing of the Committee on Articulation, New Jersey English Association

W. PAUL HAMILTON²

The Objective

The ability to write good English is the keystone not only of the college entrance portal but of all other arches through which students pass to competence in specific courses of study. The colleges *expect* high-school graduates to write well if they are to get in, and *require* undergraduates to write well if they are to stay in. Good writing is the major evidence a college teacher has of his student's power to think logically, his comprehension of what he reads, his grasp of his experience, and his skill with the techniques of written communication. The acquisition of the writing skills by secondary students is an important "must" for success in college.

Specifically, the expectation of the colleges is that entering freshmen should know how (1) to write grammatically sound sentences of varied patterns, (2)

to punctuate these sentences in accordance with accepted conventions, (3) to spell correctly, (4) to have mastery over a fairly extensive vocabulary, with a corresponding sensitivity to shades of meaning, (5) to compose paragraphs that are unified and coherent, and (6) to arrange paragraphs into well-organized whole themes. These six points occur in the descriptions of many college freshman composition courses, but with the presumption of continuity and progression and not mere repetition of secondary-school work. Freshmen (13th graders) continue to mature in the practice of the skills enumerated above simply through the normal pressure of college course requirements.

The college requirement in writing—broadly considered—is this: the boy or girl who has passed through the entrance portal and who continues on through the four years should demonstrate increasing maturity and power in his use of the rich resources of the English language. The college course generally requires the writing of long papers (1200-1500 words) three or four times a semester, or a still longer term or course paper.

¹This report is based upon 120 replies to a questionnaire sent to 151 public, parochial, and private secondary schools in New Jersey. In substance it was a paper presented at the New Jersey English Association in November and an article in the *Jersey Schoolmaster*, December, 1955. It formed part of Mr. Hamilton's contribution to CCCC Workshop 14 in New York, March, 1956.

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These essays or reports or theses are expository, critical, and analytical. They are based upon wide reading in a field, require fairly exhaustive treatment of a broad subject, and demand skill in logical organization and maturity in the handling of ideas. It is in these qualities that college writing differs from secondary-school writing. The standing of the college student in his course work and in his departmental work is largely determined by his success with such papers. What this means in terms of "articulation" is that, since the college concentrates upon composition somewhat more than upon literature, dramatics, debating, and all the other related activities in which students expend their energies, therefore the neglect of composition in secondary schools, for any reason whatsoever, is the denial and defeat of articulation. The implication for secondary-school English teachers is plain: the art of writing is an indispensable means to intellectual and emotional growth, an indispensable device for gaining mastery over an idea or an experience, and the device that accompanies thinking very much as a glove can be said to "accompany" a hand—for in a very real sense written words are the vesture of thoughts.

In this expectation and requirement with respect to writing the colleges are expressing the demand that the after-college world makes upon the college-bred for competence and leadership in the various activities of adult life. Central in this demand for adult competence and leadership is skill in the complex art of written communication. High school and college are related stages in the development of this art. Articulation of high-school and college composition programs is synonymous with the continuous and progressive maturing of adolescents into adults.

The Situation in New Jersey

There is overwhelming evidence that the teachers of English composition in New Jersey secondary schools are acutely aware of the centrality of writing in the student's whole intellectual development. They know that there is no easy simplification of the task of teaching pre-college pupils how to write, and that it is, even under ideal conditions, a time-consuming, complex, exacting job. They are fully conscious of the meaning of "articulation between school and college": they know, for example, that the colleges are not sitting in judgment with a "demand," but rather seeking a solution to a common problem.

It is clear, too, that they are frustrated in their efforts to achieve the goals they envision for their pupils. The major frustration is the excessive teacher load, which imposes upon them classes that are too large, too many class hours each week, and too many extracurricular duties and other special assignments to which English departments throughout the state contribute more than a lion's share.

This administrative burden results in neglect of composition work in three important respects: (1) fewer writing assignments, (2) less attention to teacher guidance in motivating student writing, and (3) less time for the indispensable work of evaluation of the printed product—which entails, incidentally, an almost total absence of the individual conference. In view of the usual college expectancy that college writing should exhibit ever-maturing mastery over ideas gained from reading and experience, the high-school student who has written very little and has had too little guidance and constructive criticism of his writing is the real sufferer. The student becomes the victim of the heavy teaching load, and a student so victimized in school is more likely to run into trouble in college. This is not to say that writing

skills should all be learned in secondary school; the college student is still learning much about the fine art of written expression as he continues to mature; and it is true that the pressure of life-experience teaches many a college graduate much about the writing of English prose that he did not learn in college. Writing is never easy, but continuous practice makes it easier. In view of the articulation problem with which we are concerned, the secondary student who writes frequent essays (even short ones) under teachers who are allotted *sufficient time* to do the needful work of evaluation and criticism is being adequately prepared for college writing.

Other obstacles, less serious perhaps than the excessive teacher load but serious enough, confront our teachers of writing. Many administrators fail to understand the true nature of the process of teaching composition and therefore fail to realize the necessity for schedule allowance. The hue and cry against the teaching of grammar disturbs many teachers, for they seem not yet to have resolved in their minds the issue between "formal" and "functional" grammar. Nevertheless, they do recognize that *a knowledge of grammar is an essential aid to the teaching of writing*. Too many teacher-training institutions, they declare, turn out young teachers with insufficient grounding either in grammar or in general linguistics and foreign languages—a lack which militates against the best composition teaching. Young teachers seem to have had no training in the complex of activities required for teaching the writing art. There is, in addition, a quite understandable tendency among English teachers to slight the work in composition when it is correlated with literature. The full-time, laborious nature of composition teaching would seem to call for independent teaching of the subject by experienced "specialists," or at least by the expedient of rotating the

composition burden among all the English teachers. Finally, they sense, almost two to one in their replies to a pertinent query in the questionnaire, a general deterioration of linguistic aptitude in the surrounding community, especially noticeable in the over-crowded and ever-expanding public high schools. Confronted by larger and larger classes containing more and more of the less gifted, they are frustrated in their commendable desire to do more for the more gifted in separate, advanced "creative" courses. The non-college pupils need good composition teaching as much as the pre-college group; and in the non-college group there are many gifted boys and girls who are in need of articulation, if not for college, at least for effective living in the community.

This is the way New Jersey English teachers understand their work in relation to the articulation problem. About themselves they stress the point that lack of time likewise denies them the opportunity to do the reading and writing they feel necessary for their own self-improvement.

Recommendations

In the light of the objective and the situation in New Jersey secondary schools, the subcommittee on writing recommends for the improvement of articulation:

1. That English teachers be assigned a schedule of *one period daily for individual conferences* on composition, and four, instead of five, teaching periods.¹
2. That it would lighten the burden and improve the quality of the teaching to regard 25 pupils as a maximum in each class.

¹Indiana college teachers of English, according to *Purdue English Notes*, October, 1956, approved at their spring meeting a resolution of the City Teachers' Conference at Lafayette, February, 1956, calling for a high school teaching load in English of four classes of not more than twenty-five students each (Ed.)

3. That each English teacher should have *not more than one* major extracurricular assignment.

4. That the device of *precis writing* be used regularly in pre-college English classes. The close reading, careful thinking, and compact expression demanded by the *precis* are excellent preparation for the kind of intellectual work required in many college courses.

5. That the writing of *short papers* (200-300 words) at least bi-weekly be made a regular requirement. The *regularity* and the *frequency* of such a requirement tend to keep writing skills sharp and well polished and to promote good writing habits. In harmony with this, the committee urges the use of the essay question in tests and examinations.

The long "research" paper (1500 words or more) would have value in high school only if plagiarism were scrupulously avoided.

6. That composition teachers bear in mind *the requisite stages of the writing process*: (1) *preliminary motivation* for subject, material, outline, purpose; (2) writing the paper "according to plan"; (3) audience reaction and teacher evaluation in response to purpose; and (4) *revision, rewriting, remedial measures* to improve the skills (spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, style, etc.) in preparation for the next paper. *All* of this is teaching writing; *all* of this is learning writing. The secondary pupil

who learns to think and plan before he writes, to experience audience reaction, and to practice self-criticism is on the road to competence in the writing art in succeeding levels—undergraduate, graduate, professional.

7. That, in view of the usual college emphasis upon expository, critical, and analytical writing, sub-freshmen in the 11th grade begin to spend more time upon *handling ideas* and less time upon easy narratives. Writing assignments and performances should now exemplify more seriously the principle that the good writer has "something to say" and "knows what he is talking about" because he has delved for it by study and reading.

8. That English teachers *assume personal responsibility for their own cultural self-improvement* through (1) constant practice of *writing* whether they publish or not, and (2) persistent *reading* of good and difficult books and periodicals with no thought of lesson planning.

9. That the preparation of teachers of English include a substantial amount of solid work in one or more of the allied fields of English grammar, modern English usage, history of the English language, language arts, semantics, etymology, foreign language, and the like. A teacher of composition, in short, should be "up" on the latest scholarly work in the whole field of linguistic science.

"... We must hammer away at Administrators until we convince them that a teaching load of nine hours of composition is the equivalent of fourteen hours of Literature or History or eighteen hours of Mathematics, and until they assign the best teachers on the faculty to help us in our work . . ."

Allen Blow Cook, United States Naval Academy
The CEA Critic, October 1956

The Research Paper at the Air Force Academy, 1955-56 and 1956-57

LT. COL. JAMES L. JACKSON AND MAJOR HOWARD A. LINN¹

Early in 1955 we of the Air Force Academy English staff were planning the Freshman Program to be given during 1955-56 to the first class entering the Academy. Naturally we were faced with the research paper problems discussed in the May 1956 CCC. Should the cadets do a research paper at all? One or two papers? What about good subjects?

We decided the cadets would learn better if they did two short papers of 1000 words instead of one very long one. This plan was then altered slightly by a decision to require the cadet to base one paper on library research and to submit the other as a military staff study based on non-library research.

The library research paper was simplified by our discovering that the Academy's Department of History was also planning to require a research paper. Joining forces, we agreed that the Department of History would furnish subjects, relating to the freshman History Program and approved by the English Department, and would guide the cadets to the most appropriate materials; the Department of English would teach and supervise the research techniques used. Both departments would grade the papers on the same things—content, documentation, organization, mechanics—though probably we in English would emphasize mechanics more heavily. These grades were then to be averaged and the average used in both departments. We required the full footnote and bibliography documentation given in the *Harbrace College Handbook*.

The officers in History provided such subjects as "The Boxer Rebellion," "The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and Their Ef-

fect on Turkey," and "Reasons for the First Five-Year Plan in Russian Agriculture." The cadets submitted research paper outlines, which were criticized by the English and History Departments before the papers were written.

The system by which both departments graded the papers and then averaged grades worked quite well. To all but a few papers the English and History Departments gave very similar grades, and the few cases of wide divergence were easily settled. The cadet received this averaged grade as his mark for a term paper in each department. Both departments considered the experiment in integration a success; and the cadets indicated their appreciation of a plan which let them practice their library research on a subject of importance to them in their history program.

Requiring the second research paper to be a staff study had several advantages. The staff study is a problem-and-solution format used on appropriate occasions within the Air Force to analyze administrative and personnel problems and propose solutions for them.² Usually the staff study is written by one officer, though it is sometimes prepared by a staff or committee. The format requires first a methodized analysis of the problem, then the presentation of the several solutions possible, and finally the selection of the best solution.

By requiring the second extended paper to be a staff study, the Department of English also hoped to give the cadet an introduction to analyzing and researching a current problem on which lit-

²The earlier meaning of "staff study," that of a combat plan, is now seldom met with. For a discussion of the term "staff study" see "Air Force Language in the Making," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, February 1956, p. 17.

¹Department of English, United States Air Force Academy

tle or no information had been published. We also wanted to introduce the cadet to an Air Force format which he will use as an officer.

Since our freshman cadets' military experience was not extensive, we had to find subjects which drew mainly on their Academy experience: "What foreign languages should be taught at the Academy?" "Should the Air Force Academy give major and minor sports letters of one size?" "Should dictionaries be used in writing impromptu themes?" We directed the cadet to obtain his information from his own reasoning, from interviewing staff and faculty officers of the Academy, and if he desired from a written questionnaire submitted to not more than 25 fellow cadets.

These non-literary research methods worked out well. Most of the cadets interviewed several officers, and one-fourth of the cadets gathered cadet opinion with one-page questionnaires. These cadets, typed out their own multilith stencils, which were approved by the instructors and then run off by the printing shop.

As the basis for instruction in the staff study, the cadets were furnished the *Guide for Air Force Writing*.³ This manual was used for teaching problem-solving, the format of the staff study, and the simple system of annotation by which passages in a text can be documented by numbers referring directly to the bibliography. The cadets' "bibliographies" consisted of appendixes listing interviews and the results of questionnaires.

We received an interesting and well-considered group of staff studies. The cadets gained some experience in the use of non-library research as a supplement to their library experience, and became familiar with a format they will use as officers. A few cadets relied too heavily

on preconceptions and as might be expected did not explore all possible solutions to their problems. We had sacrificed the opportunity to have the cadets profit in a second library paper from the lessons of the first. But on the whole the experiment was judged successful, and the cadets found they had learned to write a tightly organized research paper about which little information had been published.

In the freshman program planned for 1956-57 we hope to improve our research instruction further. We will again keep to short research papers, and the cadet will do three of them. Two will be done by book research, so that the cadet can first learn and then improve on his ability at this kind of research. The first of these assignments will produce a group of short papers on historical subjects, mostly American; materials for such research have recently been published in paperbound volumes organized on general historical subjects. Some of the subjects on which such pamphlets have been assembled are John Brown's Raid; America Through Foreign Eyes, 1827-1842; and Loyalty in a Democratic State.

The cadet must narrow down to a specific subject, find supporting material in the documents in his pamphlet, sift and arrange his materials, and annotate his paper correctly. The use of these pamphlets should allow the instructor to determine accurately and easily how well the cadet has synthesized material and adapted it to his purpose.

Later the cadet will do another paper, this time working in the library. He will find his subject in the literary selections read during the freshman year. Writing this paper will develop further the cadet's skill in synthesis, and will require him to become familiar with library techniques. He will use the standard annotation procedures,⁴ and will be ex-

⁴Pugh's *Guide to Research Writing* (Houghton Mifflin, 1948) will be used as the research textbook in 1956-57.

³*Air Force Manual 11-3* (Washington, 1953).

pected to improve on the skills acquired in the pamphlet exercise and to profit from the mistakes he may have made in organizing and synthesizing that material. Unfortunately we will not be able to repeat the integration of one research paper with the Department of History. A reorganization of programs has moved the history courses to the sophomore and junior years, so that we cannot repeat the History-English paper of the first year.

Finally, the cadets will write a third paper which will follow the same procedures as the first year's staff study. Again the cadet will be expected to think through a current problem, with the help of interviews and surveys, and pre-

sent his thinking in problem-solution format.

During 1956-57, the research paper instruction will naturally be intended to meet the cadet's need for a knowledge of library work for future term papers in literature and other areas of study, and it will also introduce him to some procedures and formats he may need later in his career as an Air Force officer. The direction of change from the first to the second year was to provide for closer supervision throughout the researching, synthesizing, and writing of one of the library research papers, by providing a means for the instructor to determine easily just how much of the end product is the cadet's own.

One Man's D Is Not Another Man's A

ROBERT P. WEEKS¹

There has always been a strong suspicion in the minds of students of freshman composition that the grades they receive on their themes are determined by such irrelevant factors as the color of the ink they use, the time of day when their instructor reads the theme, the number of themes he has read before he picks up theirs, and the prejudices and idiosyncrasies that befog his mind. As Roger Holmes puts it in "What Every Freshman Should Know," an essay that has become a regular in freshman essay anthologies, "It is a matter of record that given the same set of papers twice we will grade them differently. Given the same paper, moreover, various teachers will assign it grades ranging from D to A . . ."

In this day of multiple choice, true-false, and underline the correct answer, grading a theme is no longer regarded by students as an act of judgment but an exercise in impressionism if not cap-

rice. It is, of course, extremely difficult to provide effective instruction in composition to individuals who believe that one way of writing an idea is as good as another—that one man's D is another man's A. Fortunately, few students fully accept this kind of linguistic relativism, but most of them are quite suspicious.

Most of us try to remove these suspicions by comparing effectively written themes to poorly written ones in class, by having students read model essays by professional writers, and by having them revise their own work. But these methods prove weak indeed as a means of combatting the perennial tale of the theme that received a C in your class but was copied over and re-submitted in another class where it was awarded an A.

The best means I have found to persuade students that there are generally accepted standards used in grading themes is to let them grade some themselves. Near the middle of the semester,

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after they have acquired some realization of what coherence, unity, and cogency mean, I provide each of them with mimeographed copies of three or four themes written by members of their class. I try to avoid giving them themes that have been difficult for me to grade, but I do not load the dice by giving them themes that fall readily into the A, C, or E class.

I ask them to read the themes critically and to rank them in order of quality: 1 for the best theme, 2 for the next best, and so forth. I tell them *not* to grade the themes but merely to rank them. Why have them rank them instead of grading them A through E? The chief reason for this step is that it is much easier to determine whether one theme is better than another than it is to determine precisely how much better it is. Also it is much easier to rank a theme in relation to other themes than it is to give it a label as highly charged with emotion as a letter grade. It is not difficult, in other words, for a student to place a theme in the lowest rank, but it is likely to be quite difficult for him to curse it with an E.

After they have rated each theme I record their ratings in a box score on the blackboard. On the many occasions on which I have done this, I have always

found that the majority of the students agreed both among themselves and with me as to the ranking of the themes. But fortunately the minority is always ready to defend its ratings and to attack the majority view. The resulting discussion of the style, organization and content of the themes under dispute is fatal to indifferent relativism.

After this discussion the class is eager—and much more able—to assign letter grades to the themes. Again, the results are tabulated on the board. It is not unusual to find more scatter this time than when the themes were placed in rank order. But in spite of this the majority of the students have, in my experience, always agreed on how to mark the majority of the themes. Moreover, I have found that the grades I assigned to the themes agreed in most instances with the grades assigned by most of the class.

These polling sessions give many students increased respect for good writing as well as added confidence in their judgment and the instructor's. And instead of concerning themselves with the fruitless question, "Is it possible to judge a theme objectively?" they turn to two more useful questions: "Which standards of good writing are the most important?" and "How does my writing rate as measured by these standards?"

Individual Differences

BERENICE THORPE¹

What to do about individual differences among our students at college level? One answer is nothing; what can one do? People *are* different. They come from different levels and they achieve different levels. That's the way the world is.

Another answer is: make use of these differences as teaching device. Let the

better ones teach the poorer ones, by example. Let the class find its own level, each class its own curve, its own unit, with a flexible mean; let the class be articulate and knowing of each other. Be personal yet impersonal. Class unity in pursuit of the subject is the thing. What can each student bring to the class?

In a class in freshman composition, for example, the most exciting moment for

¹University of Washington

the teacher, let him explain, is when he gets that first batch of papers; and the most exciting moment for the class, let him add, is when the students get those papers back. *Then* let us read aloud some of them, wholly, in part, or in bits, to see what is *good*. Let the marginal marks on error speak for themselves; or put on the board the aggregate spelling list, the aggregate errors list: how many comma faults, how many K's or not-clears, how many agreement errors—for the whole class. That's the impersonal. Shame on the class that has a great many errors! But what do we have that is good?

Mr. X, will you read your beginning? The teacher doesn't have to point out to the class when to be impressed, when to chuckle. Miss Y, read your second paragraph, the extended example. Mr. Z, read the line marked *good* on your second page. Read aloud briefly daily in connection with the assignment. Notice the quivering make-ready, even of the seasoned war veteran, or of the student who already knows or fears he's only average, or even poor, who for the first time in his whole life perhaps is singled out for having done some specifically good thing in writing. He reads his sentence aloud. People may even speak to him about it later. Next day a classmate may jolly him before the bell rings, saying, what have you for us today? A sense of achievement, of immediate judgment or praise by his peers, fosters an immediate awareness of language and its manipulation. One student found he could not easily read a phrase aloud; or as soon as he did he saw what was wrong with it, although the surrounding matter was really good. He even reads the text book with a new self-discovering eye. Is all we need a little praise to give us zest? Well, it works as well with college students as it does with babies or

early grade levels, or with the club-woman or with our elected representatives.

To segregate the mental superior takes him out of the everyday world into an artificial world. On one extreme it makes for smugness or arrogance, on the other for unhappiness that too much is being demanded or that it seems the ideal is never reachable. Often the superior student is most humbly aware of what he lacks. Even if the teacher says it's good, he knows it could be better. He too gains by weekly comparison or contrast of himself with his classmates. He too goes through a tingling make-ready when he knows from the marks on the top of the margin of his paper "*good — read*" that he will have the floor for a few minutes, be the example to the others of what is good today.

Correct speaking, reading aloud, getting the printed meaning, the oral basis of class activity, are all by-products of this method of classroom procedure. *Give to the class* is an obligation as much as is *take from the class*.

Nowhere better than in a classroom in writing can originality be defined, that precious hope of most writers; it is individuality in action, the true and the fresh of the true, the nurturing of distinctive personal slant so important in our age of conformity. Given the same ingredients, the same assignment, note thirty ways to say it, thirty backgrounds to derive it from, thirty realms of associations. Nowhere better than in the classroom can the student find his level as soon as he knows other levels. Nowhere does he learn more quickly than from his fellows as soon as he sees or hears what range or liveliness the class is capable of, the teacher's opinion and the classroom opinion hopefully coinciding, with the textbook for reference.

Some of the Year's Work in College Composition and Communication¹

Under the title "Maintaining and Improving the Quality of Instruction," the *Journal of Higher Education* for May, 1956 has printed a panel discussion of the Eleventh National Conference on Higher Education that neatly points the issues of the next decade. Alvin C. Eurich, of the Fund for the Advancement of Education, sees television as the major solution; the greatest teachers will be brought to each campus as the printing press has made it possible to bring the greatest writers to each campus. But Harold Taylor, of Sarah Lawrence College, believes present collegiate practice has already become a "huge mechanical system for disseminating education" and that television would make little difference; he calls for experimentation that would recognize the student as the center of learning. Finally, Warner G. Rice, of the University of Michigan, calls for a renewed sense of community in which the teacher will have the status and reward that are commensurate with his talents and tasks. Then there will be no lack of fine teachers. As for television, "Gutenberg is probably of more value to us still than Sarnoff."

—G. A.

In "Learning to Read Critically," the *Junior College Journal*, March, 1956, Robert Frank reports an exercise in practical semantics at Phoenix College, Arizona. After appropriate background study, students examine the treatment of one historical figure in three representative histories of western civilization. For each book they analyze the author's verifiable information, his judgments, his inferences, and his recurring words and phrases; then they make conclusions of their own. Such an exercise,

¹From time to time items will be supplied by members of the Editorial Board. Such items will bear the writer's initials.

concludes Mr. Frank, will "Begin a slow liberation from bondage to textbooks" and will help the student "recognize the relationship between language he reads and thoughts he has."

In the same issue of the *Junior College Journal* are four other articles concerned with reading: "A Reading Program for College Freshmen," by Frances E. Oakes; "A Use for the Tachistoscope in Reading," by Cecil J. Mullins; "Reading-Centered Composition Course," by Ada Y. Hatch; and "Remedial Work in English at Wingate Junior College," by Ethel Knott Smith.

—G. A.

The English Counselor, the news letter of the Georgia Council of Teachers of English, reports in its Winter 1956 issue that the Department of English of the Georgia Institute of Technology will send sets of freshman papers to high-school teacher of English. Each packet contains six to twelve graded themes written in class and outside of it. "These themes demonstrate something of the nature of the material the Department asks the student to handle and the quality of the performance of the student. They are not presented as models of theme-grading. They are simply themes written in the normal context of class projects."

The same number of *The English Counselor* reprints about two dozen selections from essays written by students in Georgia colleges on their high-school English teachers. On the testimonies as a whole the editor comments: "Surprising to some of us will be the fact that the most effective and best loved teachers often had one trait in common: they were martinets. They demanded work and had no place or sympathy for slackers. But they are remembered with gratitude and affection."

—G. A.

The October 1955 issue of the *Bulletin of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English* presents two articles on Rudolf Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read*. The first, by Oscar M. Haugh, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Kansas, is a fully documented review of reviews. Most of the reviewers cited have judged the book adversely, particularly pointing to Mr. Flesch's inadequate knowledge of current school practice and to his easy simplification of the problems and solutions. In addition to the presentation of the reviews, Mr. Haugh describes the earlier work of Mr. Flesch and the extent of its bearing on the current volume; further, he raises a number of questions about the motives of Mr. Flesch in writing his attack.

The second article, by Dora V. Smith of the NCTE and the University of Minnesota, is reprinted from the Minneapolis *Tribune*. Miss Smith finds the book "very strange" both because Mr. Flesch has little knowledge of what is going on in schools and because his concept of reading is limited to pronouncing words without necessarily understanding them. Her reply points out the inadequacies of an exclusively phonic method and recommends the sixth chapter in *Language Arts for Today's Children* as presenting a well-rounded picture. Miss Smith also answers Mr. Flesch's allegation that the reading problem is peculiar to the United States by citing several British and continental authorities.

—G. A.

Though addressed primarily to non-college teachers, John C. Gerber's remarks on "The Status and Obligations of the English Teacher" have relevance also at the college level. Speaking to the 1955 Summer Workshop of the New York State English Council (see their *English Record*, Fall '55) the then NCTE president pointed out that the general public

thinks of English teachers as sentimental, pedantic, and ineffective. These notions have some foundation. To be sure, they rest mainly upon stereotypes and upon ignorance of the cultural obstacles that impair our effectiveness. But we could do a better job in at least three ways. (1) Do more responsible research. "Too many of our articles are testimonials rather than reports of controlled experiments." (2) Draw more upon radio and television as study models for communication problems and as materials for criticism and the development of taste. These media bulk large in our students' lives. (3) Better adapt assignments to individual differences. Resist excessive standardization; there is no "concept . . . indispensable for all students." Each student should be assigned work that is for him both challenging and possible.

—R. E. T.

What kind of remedial writing course is more effective, (A) a "grammar-drill" class with 14 themes corrected by the instructor outside of class, or (B) a "writing-laboratory" course with about 40 in-class themes and no outside work for the instructor? In a Purdue University experiment R. C. Maize attacked this problem with 149 students in English A, a one-semester propaedeutic for the regular English 1. ("Two methods of Teaching English to Retarded College Freshmen," *Journal of Educational Psychology* XLV, January 1954, 22-28). Maize assigned 75 to the writing-laboratory type of course indicated, 74 to the "grammar-drill" type as an equated control group. Thirteen psychological and ability tests, specified in the report, established group equivalency. The results of the semester's work was that, except for vocabulary gain, the experimental (writing-lab) group showed "clear evidence of superiority . . . as a result of the methods of instruction."

—R. E. T.

